Volunteering in the Higher Education Curriculum: The Politics of Policy, Practice and Participation

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This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose (unless otherwise indicated). Save for any express acknowledgments, references and/or bibliographies cited in the work, I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

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Abstract

This study explores the extent to which government policies for higher education impact upon the ways in which higher education institutions (HEIs) implement these and the students themselves experience their studies.

The focus is accredited volunteering in higher education. A case study approach has been undertaken to scrutinise the impact of policy directives on several stakeholders within one post-1992 HEI, the University of Wrottesley (a pseudonym). The methodological approach is qualitative. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with senior university staff and Students Union personnel, and a detailed on-line survey was conducted with three cohorts of students undertaking the Volunteering in the Curriculum (ViC) programme.

What emerges is the extent to which the dominant discourse of 'employability' is foregrounded in government policy directives, and the pressures thus placed on the university management of Wrottesley to respond effectively to first destination scores (DHLE). 'Employability' in this sense is understood as a graduate student obtaining employment, rather than a broader sense of good learning which embraces both learning (cognitive, theoretical and practical) and employability (Knight & Yorke, 2004).

The findings expose the ways in which volunteering has been drawn into the dominant discourse of 'employability', yet what emerges from the student survey of their participation in the ViC programme is a broader, more nuanced learning experience which draws on both experiential and theoretical learning that encompasses academic studies, personal development, social action and graduate employment. The evidence validates the theoretical and pedagogic practice of ViC whereby students experience holistic learning.

Universities such as Wrottesley are missing an opportunity in not embracing wider objectives of initiatives such as ViC which enable enhancement of graduate employability and also learning gain with the development of well rounded critical citizens and institutional permeability between community and the academy.

Contents

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Glossary

CBL	Community-based learning
C-SAP	Centre for Sociology, Anthropology and Politics
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sectors
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEACF	Higher Education Active Community Fund
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
LSOA	Lower layer Super Output Area
Nfp.	Not for profit sectors
OCS	Office of Civil Society
OfS	Office for Students
OTS	Office of the Third Sector
S-L	Service-Learning
ViC	Volunteering in the Curriculum
VS	Voluntary Sector

Background context to thesis

This study was undertaken to explore the connections between national policy, institutional policy directives, and the lived experiences of students undertaking Volunteering in the Curriculum (ViC) in one higher education institution (HEI). ViC was conceived as a recognised and accredited pathway of modules through an undergraduate programme of study to harness both the theoretical classroom learning and the practical and experiential learning to be gained through volunteering in an organised community setting. Having been at the forefront of developing accredited volunteering, I had been an academic lecturer and practitioner of ViC within higher education for more than thirty years, and have now retired from teaching.

The main data collection period for this professional doctorate was undertaken during the academic year 2011-12. The early chapters capture the national policy framework in the years prior to 2011-12, and at that time. During those years both New Labour and Coalition governments were driving the national policy agenda.

Due to a long-term health condition, the subsequent analysis and writing up of the study did not take place until 2015-17. It is clear that some policy directions will have had an impact on this study, and relevant discussion of these is included here. This research could be considered to be a case study in time, but what has been significant during this gap is how much the findings still resonate today. Given the

current national policy drivers around ‘employability’, in the form of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) which includes the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) and Learning Gain (none of which existed when the data was collected), ‘employability’ is shaping institutional agendas even more strongly than ever. So, where appropriate, I signal the relevance of this research for the current climate.

There are two final points to make. The term ‘voluntary sector’ will be used throughout this thesis in order to identify not-for-profit organisations that are implicated in the political policy discourse explored. Also, this research has established that the term ‘employability’ is used differentially by different stakeholders. I therefore use the term in two ways. ‘Employability’ signals the way that it is used within government policy directives and higher education management. This offers a narrow concept of the term, and one that Knight & Yorke (2003a:4) describe as ‘demonstrated by the graduate actually obtaining a job’. The second is Knight & Yorke’s (2004:22) use of the term in which a broader set of strategies for higher education provide an holistic model of good learning that embraces ‘career, citizenship and more besides’. Therefore I will distinguish between the two by the use of quotation marks when referring to the dominant government discourse.

Chapter One

The changing policy context of volunteering in higher education

1.1. Historical context of policy interest in volunteering

> ***Governments have long been interested in volunteering…successive administrations of both left and right have sent out a clarion call for people to play a more active role in their communities (Davis Smith, 2001:185).***

This chapter will outline the recent history from the mid 20th century of policy shifts concerned with volunteering and the voluntary sector. This will provide a basis from which to examine how these shifts have impacted on university student volunteering in particular. It will then outline the parameters of this study, including a discussion of the institution in which research was undertaken, outlining the research aims and exploring the relevance and importance of these.

My study will examine these developments through an institutional case study. My key research questions are:

1. How has the political and national policy context impacted on institutional responses to accredited student volunteering in higher education?
2. What are the learning experiences of students undertaking volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?
3. What, if anything, do students value about the range of learning opportunities afforded by ViC?

1.2. Neo-liberalism and higher education

The rise of neo-liberal ideologies needs to be placed in context in this exploration, as these have had a significant impact on the delivery of higher education in the UK as elsewhere. Neoliberal ideology has its roots in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA were getting into their respective political and economic strides. A modified form of liberalism, neoliberalism espouses the value of the free market with minimum state intervention. Harvey (2007:2) makes the point that individualism can flourish within a framework that characterises 'strong property rights, free markets, and free trade'. The new managerialism that emerged meant a more specific focus on targets and financial incentives, individual entrepreneurship, free markets and free trade. (Harvey, 2007; Radice, 2013).

These principles have impacted upon higher education in the UK and elsewhere since the 1970s (Levidow, 2002; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Radice, 2013) and has been characterised by Levidow (2002:1) as 'academic capitalism'. With this, Levidow (2002:221) claims that 'higher education has become more synonymous with training for employability'. Olssen & Peters (2005:315) explain that 'in neoliberalism the state seeks to create an individual that is an enterprising and competitive entrepreneur'. Thus individual private-interests are seen to trump intellectual enquiry and engaging

collectively in community endeavours. Olssen & Peters (2005:330) argue that the subsequent reform of higher education 'is in the rise in the importance of knowledge as capital'. The following chapters will chart the course of this trend throughout the research project reported here.

1.3. Mid 20th century context

William Beveridge, the author of the Beveridge Report upon which state welfare services were built in the UK in 1948, was himself convinced that the voluntary sector had an important role to play in such services alongside the public sector (Harris et al, 2001). It has been suggested by some however, that once the welfare state was established voluntary activity declined as the national welfare system took over many of its functions (Kendall, 2005; Zimmeck, 2010; Brewis, 2014). Kendall (2005:3) suggests that 'the 40s to the 60s can be portrayed as an era of pro-state welfare optimism'. The voluntary sector became increasingly ripe for state policy attention and intervention because of the recognition from the 1960s onwards of the inability of the state to deliver increasing demands (Kendall, 2005; Lavender, 2007; Anheier, 2014). Zimmeck (2010:86) argues that 'by the 1960s, the glory days of the welfare state were over'.

> The first signs that a wider overarching policy apparatus might be thought appropriate coincided with the late 1970s to the mid 1990s, when social commentators were becoming increasingly frustrated with the state (Kendall, 2005:7).

The Wolfenden Report of 1978 proved a turning point in this policy focus, since it supported what Kendall (2005: 7) describes as 'wider incremental institutional consolidation' and from then on the collective term 'the voluntary sector' was being more widely used. Crowson (2011:492) points out that 'the Thatcher government had been elected on a promise to reduce public spending.' Volunteers and voluntary organisations could play a vital role in providing some of these resources. Thus the mixed economy of welfare - welfare pluralism – became increasingly important in the delivery of services. This approach proved helpful to the Thatcher government's policy aim of rolling back the state, in line with neoliberal ideology outlined in the previous section. The participation of the voluntary sector to carry out some activities previously done by public sector agencies began to gather force (Kramer, 1981; Harris et al, 2001). The ensuing relationship between state and the voluntary sector was by no means harmonious however and witnesses comment that the increasing grant culture, rather than grant funding, imposed controls that could compromise organisations in terms of what, and how, services would be delivered, sat uneasily with the voluntary sector (Crowson, 2011).

John Major's subsequent Conservative government initiated the Make a Difference programme from 1994. This proffered an 'integrated approach to increasing individual involvement in the community' (Home Office, 1994, cited by Davis Smith, 2001:187). Local Volunteer Development Agencies (LDVAs), and the setting up of the Volunteering

Partnership for England, meant more direct policy intervention than ever before. Zimmeck (2010:89) comments that this initiative was:

> the most ambitious and innovative programme …[with] government planned coordinated implementation of a jointly agreed policy for volunteering.

1.4. New Labour administrations 1997 - 2010

However, it was New Labour governments that exceeded even this level of policy intervention. The political aims of the New Labour administrations included community cohesion, active citizenship and social inclusion (Hall et al, 2004; Worley, 2005). Policy attention drew on an instrumental interest in the contribution the sector can provide to public services and be a source of social enterprise, the latter gaining momentum during these years (Alcock, 2010; Anheier, 2014). The Compact, established in 1998, was the first tangible evidence of this policy shift. New Labour's commitment was to draw on the work of voluntary and community groups, seeing them as integral to their own mission to reform public services (Alcock, 2010; Milligan & Conradson, 2011; Potter et al, 2012). As the Compact (1998:5) states,

> voluntary and community organisations make a major and literally incalculable contribution to the development of society and to the social, cultural, economic and political life of the nation.

Key watchwords within the Compact are 'partnership working' to emphasise collaboration rather than competition, and for the state to have an enabling role by which to support and promote civic

participation (Lewis, 2005). It is interesting to see that as part of the Third Way thinking (more of which later) whilst a neoliberal ideological approach is still in force, the co-operation and support of agencies and organisations was sought in order to develop a joined-up service delivery which fits into New Labour's political aims of community engagement and partnerships (Hall et al, 2004; Worley, 2005).

Thus the expansion of the voluntary sector was under way at an unprecedented scale. As Alcock (2010:1) has argued:

> This was a period of rapid policy change with a rise in the profile of voluntary action to rival, if not outstrip, that at any point in the previous century.

Kendall (2003, 2005) asserts that this strengthening of policy intention mainstreamed the voluntary sector as an essential part of the service delivery framework. Anheier (2014: 13) suggests that:

> Nonprofit organisations are now seen as a part of the wider civil society and welfare systems of societies generally.

This interest was demonstrated by increased funding from the government, which Brindle (2009) states grew to an average 5.4per cent a year from 2000 to 2007, compared with 4.5 per cent a year between 1991 and 1999. Between the years 2005/6 and 2006/7 alone, the number of general charities registered grew by 7,000, with a corresponding income growth of £1.1 billion in the same time frame (NCVO, 2009).

Whilst accredited student volunteering was established at Wrottesley during the Thatcher government, it is the increased policy attention from the New Labour governments that gave impetus to a renewed policy interest in general student volunteering.

Direct policy intervention during these years also targeted university students, encouraging volunteering activity through the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF). Funded jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Active Community Unit of the Home Office's Community Active Office, this provided £27m funding for English universities. This policy direction was a continuation of developing partnership working, designed to encourage the greater involvement of universities and students in service with voluntary sector organisations in the community in which they reside. This will be examined in more detail in section 1.7.

In a move that was intended to shift focus from neo-liberalism towards a concerted effort by a combination of state, the market, community and voluntary organisations to provide social welfare needs, the ideological conviction of New Labour was what became known as the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998). The 'third way' was a deliberate move away from the traditional social democracy of the political left, as well as the focus on a market economy of the political right. When Tony Blair, then Prime Minister, admitted in his speech to the NCVO in 1999 that government alone could not achieve its aims, he was committing his administration to harnessing the obligation of others, voluntary

organisations included, to play their part in accomplishing these. The 'third way' was therefore an important strategy of the civil renewal agenda, and volunteers a key element of this pluralised social economy (Macmillan and Townsend, 2011; Milligan and Fyfe, 2011).

The term 'Third Sector' was used purposefully during the New Labour years, signalling the significance of the sector alongside both the private and public sectors as sources of delivery of services. The Office of the Third Sector (OTS) was established in 2006, within the Home Office, again with the emphasis on partnership working, strengthening and empowering communities, and indicating the importance in which government held volunteer and community organisations (Startups, 2008). David Blunkett (2001:1) the former Home Secretary, argued that

> A strong culture of volunteering brings with it confident individuals, empowered communities which are safe and friendly places to live, better services, local and national government which is more responsive and a more vibrant economy.

This is a strong confirmation that New Labour was investing in the voluntary sector as 'key sites for promoting social cohesion via the development of citizenship and social capital' (Milligan & Conradson, 2011: 35).

Alcock (2010) identifies New Labour investment in the third sector, as pointing to a central role for the sector during the New Labour years. Edwards and Woods (2011:55) suggest that this shift moved the sector

to being ‘partners in community governance’. This can be seen in the sector’s involvement in the New Deal for Young People initiative, one of the early policy interventions of the New Labour Government. A compulsory Welfare-to-Work Programme, one of the four options offered to those aged between 18-24 and registered unemployed for more than six months was to work with a voluntary sector organisation. There was a sanction that if this, or one of the other options on offer, was not taken up benefits would be stopped (Jarvis, 1997). As Edwards and Woods (2011) make clear, an element of coercion is evident here. The concept of, and the motivations for, contributing to a voluntary organisation are beginning to blur and as such there are consequences for voluntary sector organisations, their staff and their volunteers. This has consequences for student volunteering in higher education, in which the alignment of volunteering with employment is seen to occur. This will be examined in more detail in chapter four.

1.5. Coalition government 2010 - 2015

With the arrival of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government in 2010, came the development of ideas that would replace this ideological political position. David Cameron’s rhetorical stance on the ‘Big Society’, Anheier (2014:38) argues, ‘borrows heavily from the US system of self-organisation’. Big Society thinking was very much influenced by Blond (2010:239) who espoused a new and different approach:

> in order to put a virtuous society at the centre, we require not only a mutualist civic economy, but also a civil state in which professional responsibility has been restored to individuals and collegiate groups.

Arguing that the state had become too big and powerful under New Labour, the 'Big Society' was to promote three key areas for action:

1. Empowering communities – localising power and responsibility
2. Opening up public services – enabling communities and voluntary organisations to run services traditionally operated within the public sector
3. Promoting social action – promoting individual volunteering and philanthropy (adapted from Cabinet Office, 2010).

The focus here is the neoliberal agenda of 'rolling back the state', and pursuing the advancement of civil society. It is recognised that this is a contested term, and there are various interpretations for this (Evers, 2013). In line with neoliberalism, reducing the state's involvement with the voluntary sector (including financial support) while promising greater autonomy and local provision for local concerns, offers the prospect of reducing state involvement, and promoting power to the people (Kisby, 2010). This re-mixing of welfare provision would allow for 'a transfer of ownership of welfare services to an extended third sector' (Alcock, 2012:8) to take over from public sector bodies.

The Coalition government also inherited the fiscal deficit caused by the global collapse of financial markets in 2007-08 (HM Treasury, 2013). The Big Society was then seen by some (Potter et al, 2012; Alcock, 2012) as a fig leaf to cover the reduction in public and voluntary sector spending. Taylor–Gooby & Stoker (2011:4) describe the policy changes

as ‘the cumulative, abrupt and substantial programme of public spending cuts and tax increases’ while the neoliberal reforms ‘also include a far-reaching restructuring of state services, involving significant transfers of responsibility from the state to the private sector and to the citizen’. While the rhetoric of the ‘Big Society’ began as an important plank of the Coalition agenda from 2010, it soon disappeared from government statements (Hetherington, 2013; Butler 2015) and Kershaw (2016:23) notes that ‘nothing came of the “big society”, a largely empty slogan that quietly disappeared’.

After more than a decade of explicit policy and funding expansion from Labour governments, reduction in state funding began to leave many voluntary sector organisations weakened, or threatened with closure. The severe deficit reduction plan throughout the Coalition years have seen substantial cuts to both public and voluntary sector spending. Reductions of between 10 per cent and 25 per cent of local authority financial support has meant that, in turn, they have reduced the financial support they provide for voluntary sector organisations in their region (Alcock, 2012). The 2012 NCVO Almanac identified £77million worth of cuts during 2011 alone.

Table 1: Estimated change in government spending on the voluntary sector, 2010/11 – 2015/16 (£ millions, 2010/11 prices)

Source: NCVO Almanac, 2012

Whilst the term 'civil society' pre-dated the Coalition government, it was taken up and used by them in an attempt to shift political discourse away from third sector rhetoric (Alcock, 2010; Milbourne, 2013). The Office for Civil Society was established within the Home Office (Milbourne and Cushman, 2013) to denote individuals and organisations that contribute to associational life and wellbeing of citizens.

Continuing the neo-liberal policies of New Labour with regard to 'Welfare-to-Workfare', the Coalition government similarly provided several initiatives to encourage and support the unemployed into work. One, the Community Action Programme (CAP) launched in June 2014 provides for mandatory unpaid placements of six months, again with the sanction of losing benefits if claimants do not comply. Activities

under the Community Action Programme should provide for benefit to the local community (Hinton, 2012). Voluntary sector organisations were required to be the provider of many of these positions, yet the same week that CAP was launched, as many as 350 voluntary sector organisations had pledged to boycott the scheme, claiming that it undermined the notion of volunteering activity being given freely and without coercion (National Coalition for Independent Action, 2014). The campaign 'Keep Volunteering Voluntary' began protesting at the same time that CAP began operating, with a clear message:

> Workfare schemes force unemployed people to carry out unpaid work or face benefit sanctions that can cause hardship and destitution. We believe in keeping volunteering voluntary and will not participate in government workfare schemes. (Keep Volunteering Voluntary, 2014:1)

The concept of volunteering is being muddied with mixed messages about what volunteering is. The difference between volunteering and 'employability' is, thanks to political interest and policy direction, beginning to be ever more indistinct. For the purpose of this study, and in terms of student volunteering in particular, this will be known as the 'job-shop model' - in which volunteering is increasingly seen as a route to employment, with the danger of eclipsing a range of other factors associated with the learning experience of volunteering. It has implications too, for the way in which student volunteering is seen in universities as a route to graduate 'employability', and this will be explored in more detail in later chapters.

One final and important factor to note of the Coalition government years, is that student tuition fees were tripled, up to £9,000 per annum in order to restructure universities' financial provision (Coughlan, 2010). The impact on students of taking on larger debts has been a significant burden on them and their families, and increases the pressure on individuals to achieve graduate level employment (that is, employment which requires a degree level qualification) in order to pay these off.

1.6. Conservative governments, 2015 to date

From this account of policy intervention and direction in recent history, it can be seen that volunteers and the voluntary sector have been of increasing interest to governments and politicians, although it is noted that the Coalition government, with an austerity mindset, was slow to provide further specific initiatives (Rochester et al, 2011), as indeed has the subsequent Conservative governments. In early 2017 the current Prime Minister, Theresa May, in an address to the Charity Commission, signalled an ideological replacement for the 'Big Society' and espoused the political slogan of a '"shared society" in which the government will take a more hands-on approach to helping marginalised people' (Cooney, 2017:1) but no further policy intentions have been announced to help make this happen.

The neoliberal political landscape emerging in recent decades has meant important shifts for higher education, namely increasing marketisation,

setting out the benefits of higher education to individual students, a focus on graduate 'employability', and conflation of volunteering with work experience. This shift includes shifting the burden of debt for degree level study to the individual. This focus on individual benefit to students is in tension with the long held notion of volunteering being good for society as a whole.

1.7. Background and historical development of student volunteering

It is to be noted here that Brewis (2014) is pre-eminent in the historical scholarship of university student volunteering, and will be used extensively, although not exclusively, in this section.

The previous sections have shown that government relationships with the voluntary sector provide the backdrop to the way in which policy fluctuations influence the way in which the voluntary sector can operate. This section will provide the background to the way in which university students engage in volunteering activity. Students in higher education have a long history of volunteering. Within the elite system of university education in previous centuries, students participated in university sponsored settlements, (Smith, 1999; Brewis & Finnegan, 2012). These are houses (one of the first, and probably most famous, is Toynbee Hall in London, which still stands today) in which university students would live amongst working class people with the aim of democratising the social process, and engaging in health and youth

work, adult education and social work. (Bradley 2009; Freeman, 2011; Field, 2012; Brewis, 2014).

From these early days in student community engagement, the inter-war period saw a proliferation of student activity to support student hardship internationally in the wake of harsh conditions following World War I.

> European Student Relief was established as a special committee of the WSCF [World Student Christian Federation] with its headquarters in Geneva (Brewis, 2014:53).

In 1922 the National Union of Students (NUS) was founded, and Brewis (2014) argues that it was the academic year of 1932-1933 that marked a distinct social awareness of students' engagement with social issues as the Depression deepened. Indeed, she argues that the 'decade [1930s] was marked by a determination to do something manifest through increased student social and political activity' (Brewis, 2014:90). During the depression of the 1930s, when a Coalition government was dominated by the Conservative party (Brewis, 2014), student volunteers contributed to international workcamps and camps for the unemployed. This is a continuation of concern for social issues already addressed by settlements, while Field (2012:195) suggests it also has 'contemporary concerns with service learning'. Service Learning is the concept (largely developed in the United States) where students have a learning experience outside of the classroom which contributes to identified needs within the community, whilst gaining

additional practical insights into course content (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). This is usually credit bearing, and of course has resonance for the aims of accredited student volunteering (ViC) which will be drawn on later. Particularly useful during the long summer vacations, students worked alongside unemployed workers to renovate buildings, and construct new ones (Brewis, 2014).

The post World War II years in the UK saw continuing student volunteering involvement in leading camps for working class and unemployed men, although Brewis (2014) notes that student interest was beginning to wane, and the appeal of service overseas was growing. The expansion of UK universities in the 1960s provided opportunities for a more diverse student population, with a growing number of female undergraduates benefiting from the rise of the 'new universities' of the 1960s (Dyhouse, 2006). The period saw a surge of political protest and social awareness, as Brewis (2014:179) makes clear:

> Changing student attitudes to the outside community and the wider world led to a more politicised understanding of voluntary service at home and international development overseas.

Brewis (2014:180) describes this approach as a 'shift from service to action'. Student rag weeks continued to be a major source of student activity of raising money for charitable causes, while from the late 1960s increasing political activism, protests and campaigning were beginning to shift the attention of students. Jack Straw, a senior Labour

politician during the New Labour administrations but at the time a student activist, declared:

> We want to see unions making community action a central part of their activities (Brewis, 2010:9).

It was in this climate that Student Community Action (SCA) was formed in the early 1970s to promote and support university student volunteering. Following this development, rag weeks began to be less popular, and community action was being heralded as 'an alternative form of radicalism, different to but aligned with student occupations or sit-ins'. (Brewis, 2014: 184). This allied to the questioning more widely (discussed in 1.2 above) of the role of the state in its ability to deliver the programme of ever increasing range of social needs.

> A change is coming over Student Community Action. More and more SCA groups are realising that social service, though often valuable, is not facing up squarely to the large-scale questions of our society (Brewis, 2010:11).

This ideology is in contrast to the current prioritising of 'employability', which benefits individual students.

The Voluntary Services Unit of the Home Office funded the setting up of the Student Community Action Development Unit in 1981 and (Brewis, 2010:13) reports that:

> By the late 1980s there were SCA groups in 100 universities, colleges and polytechnics involving 15,000 students.

By the 1990s the Make a Difference Strategy initiated by the Conservative Government highlighted youth and student volunteering, (Conn et al, 2014). In the 1990s, a focus on skills development and 'employability' was increasingly prioritised in higher education delivery, in part responding to the Dearing Report of 1997, which introduced the concept of key skills across all disciplines, [re-]introduced the idea of students contributing to the cost of their education, and to continue the expansion of student numbers (Dearing, 1997). There is a continuum here between the Conservative and New Labour neoliberal political ideas discussed in section 1.2 earlier, in that individuals are deemed to be free to choose, take responsibility for, and benefit from, higher education (Thorson, 2010). It is clear that the neoliberal ideology of individual achievement is being embedded, together with marketization of higher education and a focus on education for graduate employment.

Key skills together with the value of 'work experience', were identified in order to develop the potential for individual graduate 'employability'. It is not a huge leap from this to recognise the strengths of student volunteering in terms of the practical experience this brought to the 'employability' agenda. And, as Conn et al (2014:25) make clear:

> There was a further shift in the recognition of the role that student volunteering and community action could play in improving a university's relations with its local community.

These twin aims, that of graduate employability *and* community engagement were contained within policy intervention aimed at student

volunteering. This was the New Labour administration's announcement of the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF), encouraging and supporting the development of student and staff volunteering within higher education institutions in England. Funded jointly by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Active Community Unit of the Home Office's Community Action Office this initiative was intended to ensure that volunteering will help students to:

> gain new perspectives and enable them to develop their employment skills while enhancing the quality of life in disadvantaged sections of the community. (HEFCE, 2001:2)

Aligned with New Labour's neoliberal policy drivers outlined earlier, the twin objectives for university students were enhanced skills development leading to graduate employment, together with promoting a fairer, more cohesive society. The political aim of recognising the voluntary sector as a substantial player at this time was an important part of the strategy to provide students with a wealth of volunteering experience that can contribute significantly towards skills development and graduate employment. The £27m HEACF funding initiative inevitably drew huge interest from the majority of the HEIs in England, and very soon many institutions were establishing volunteering programmes for their students and staff.

Much of the funding was channelled in one of two directions: many institutions opted to support Student Unions to set up brokerage programmes of volunteering, others organised theirs through careers

departments; the latter signifying the importance institutions accorded the links between volunteering and 'employability'. The models of volunteering developed within these schemes were extra-curricular; that is, students engaged in these activities in addition to their undergraduate programmes of study. At that time few institutions developed credit-bearing modules linked to academic programmes of study, but these included Liverpool University, Liverpool John Moores, Birkbeck, and Sheffield Hallam.

From 2001 student volunteering developed on a scale not previously seen before, in a variety of structured formats within UK higher education institutional life. This is entirely in line with New Labour policy directives, in that partnerships were one of the key planks of the administrations, and universities were required to demonstrate their commitment to partnership working. Balloch & Taylor (2001:3) argue that with the national compact between government and voluntary and community sectors the New Labour government that came to power in 1997:

> tied its colours firmly to the partnership mast, announcing its intention to move from a contract culture to a partnership culture.

This level of funded support for generating university student and staff volunteering lasted until 2004. HEACF round 2 provided £10m until 2006 (HEFCE, 2004). From 2006 until 2009 student volunteering continued to have support from within the Teaching Quality

Enhancement Fund (TQEF, 2011). When this came to an end student volunteering activities were absorbed into HEFCE's Teaching Enhancement and Student Support (TESS, 2010). From 2009 onwards, no ring-fenced funding was available for volunteering activity and existing units within HEIs had to bid for mainstream funding. Institutions had to decide whether, or if, to continue the infrastructure for the schemes that had been created over the previous eight years.

When the New Labour administration was replaced by the Coalition government, it was noticeable that university student volunteering had less prominence in policy terms. Instead the government established the National Citizen Service aimed at 16-17 year olds (National Citizen Service, 2015). Meanwhile third sector organisations, as well as volunteers generally, were expected to do more in terms of delivering services whilst, as already explored, resource funding was being reduced by the state (NCVO Almanac, 2012).

Having established the development of student volunteering generally, the next section explores the context of the institution in which the case study research was conducted.

1.8. Institutional Case Study

As mentioned in the abstract, the pseudonym of Wrottesley has been used throughout this thesis. The University of Wrottesley is a post-1992 institution in an area designated as one of the most deprived 20 per

cent of Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in England with significant levels of deprivation (IMD, 2007).The region has one of the highest proportions of working age population with no qualifications, and average earnings lower than for the UK as a whole (Medland, 2011/12).

Wrottesley has a significant history of pursuing a widening participation agenda for a diverse student body, with a high rate of first generation degree entrants from low participation neighbourhoods (Anderson & Green, 2006). Figures for the academic year 2010-11 (when data for this study was gathered) show that the majority of students come from the West Midlands, at 76 per cent. Whilst white students made up the most significant presence at 58.2 per cent, Asian students constituted 22.3 per cent, and there were 11.1 per cent black students (the remaining 8.4 per cent made up of 'mixed race' and other categories). Interestingly female student numbers predominate at 58.7 per cent, and there was a significant presence of mature students (aged over 25) at 41.5 per cent (University of Wrottesley, 2017)

It needs to be remembered too, that working class students are not only economically disadvantaged, but also as Mallman (2017:236) contends, they do not have the same sense of belonging that accrues to their middle class counterparts:

> Working class students arrive at university with disadvantages in inherited symbolic and economic resources. However, they are prone to viewing their

> difficulties with university transition as deriving from inherent individual deficiencies.

The economics of higher education under current neoliberal thinking means universities are now seen as businesses (Radice, 2013) and as such face competition within a market economy. Harvey (2001:103) argues that there is a 'pecking order' in terms of higher education in the minds of graduate recruiters:

> Some institutions have good graduate employment rates because of their reputation but that may have more to do with employers' perceptions that the 'best' students go *to* the institution rather than perceptions about how well students are developed *at* them.

Current ranking of HEIs therefore, would place post-1992 institutions such as Wrottesley lower down the hierarchy than those of the Russell Group (Williams, 1997; Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Anderson & Green, 2006). It is not surprising that post-1992 institutions have less control and autonomy than those of the Russell Group, and therefore experience more pressure to conform to policy demands from governments. These pressures within a neo-liberal political agenda include economic outcomes and value for money for higher educational study, resulting in graduate 'employability' as a specific focus in economic and policy terms (HEA, 2015; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Yorke, 2006; McArthur, 2011). This continues the pursuit of individualistic achievement as a private good, driven by the neoliberal policy direction pursued, as explored in section 1.2 of this chapter. Moreover, increased student tuition fees of up to £9,000 per annum imposed by the Coalition government (Coughlan, 2010) meant that students at

institutions such as Wrottesley faced huge pressures in achieving graduate employment in order to pay off loans.

More recent evidence of the neoliberal policy thrust includes the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), yet another scheme which increases the accountability of higher education institutions. The TEF assesses teaching standards, one of the metrics of which is 'employability or further study' (TEF, 2017). Out of the TEF framework comes the category of Learning Gain, as did Teaching Quality and the Learning Environment. According to Kandiko-Howson (2017:2) Learning Gain 'can be understood as a change in knowledge, skills, work-readiness, and personal development, as well as enhancement of specific practices and outcomes in defined disciplinary and institutional contexts'. A range of qualities are taken into account, of which work-readiness in the graduate working world is one of the key metrics. In the context of Wrottesley, it is clear that the demands on individual student attainment of graduate level employment is huge, and reflects the level of pressure on institutions such as Wrottesley to focus on the narrow 'job-shop' model of 'employability' in order to meet national policy concerns.

The current emphasis in government policy direction means that graduate 'employability' becomes more of a challenge when confronted with a structurally differentiated labour market. Various research findings (Morley, 2001; Blasko et al, 2002; Marr & Leach, 2005; Harvey, 2001; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006) show that turning

employability into graduate employment is hampered when confronted with a labour market that differentiates between status of HEIs, age, class, race and gender identities of graduates. As Moreau & Leathwood (2006:309) have pointed out, 'this policy discourse constructs employability as a matter of individual attributes and responsibility, with scarce reference to structured opportunities in the education and labour markets'. It is acknowledged that 'working-class students and minority ethnic students who do participate are more likely to attend post-1992 universities' (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003:597). Given that 'educational inequalities begin early and are rooted in wider social and economic inequalities' (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003:613), post-1992 institutions such as Wrottesley therefore have a duty to address these inequalities with robust systems of support which integrate rigorous academic learning with employment related skills (Marr & Leach, 2005; Anderson & Green, 2006).

Within this context, Wrottesley is one in which community-based volunteering and learning already had a considerable history (Green & Cameron, 1994). The Student Link initiative, in which students are able to undertake an applied social research project, which would be of benefit to an organisation in the not-for-profit sector, was accredited within the social science curriculum as long ago as the late 1980s (Green & Cameron, 1994). One of the pioneering schemes in higher education in the UK, it is an opportunity for community-based learning to become part of the curriculum, and as such, is seen as a useful

device for encouraging students to engage with theory while carrying out a practical research project within, and for, a community-based organisation. It offers students an opportunity to experience organisational settings, to develop project management and interpersonal skills, address a range of social issues, and network with professionals in the public and voluntary sectors, where many students within the social sciences would be seeking employment following graduation. The pedagogic rationale is that students have the opportunity to undertake applied research which provides practical experience of negotiating, managing and executing a project of benefit to an external organisation. This provides a practical basis in which academic skills and knowledge can be developed alongside organisational, 'real-world' involvement. (Green, 2003). This practice is specifically rooted in the not-for-profit sectors in which student engagement is key to achieving benefits for the communities in which they live and study. In other words, two-way benefits can accrue for both students and communities. Such community partnership working is entirely in line with the political agendas of both John Major's Conservative government and the Labour administrations of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown that emphasised the overarching interests of different organisations (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Dhillon, 2013).

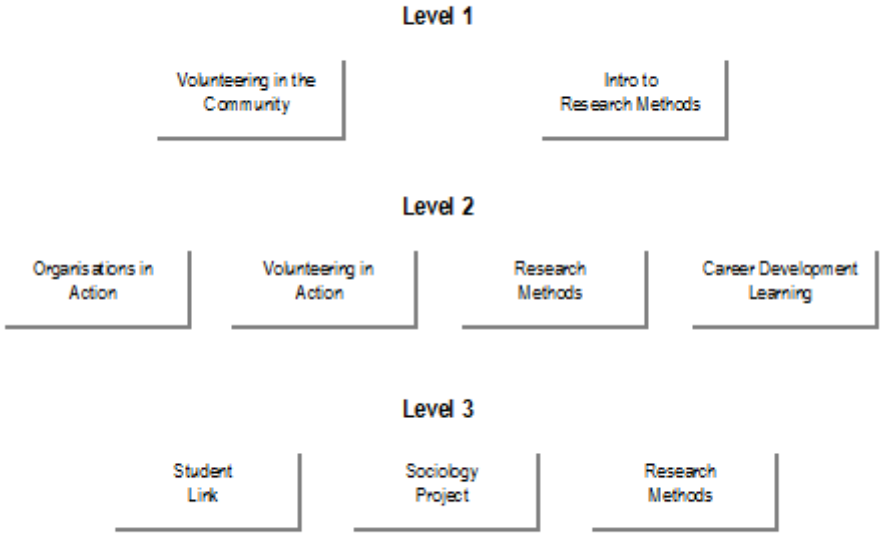
The success of Student Link was quickly followed by accredited volunteering modules at levels 4 and 5, in which students engage in

activities in, and for, not-for-profit sectors. These unique opportunities support learning in three ways:

1. Experiential learning in the community, about the community – *learning by doing.*
2. Connecting community engagement with university based theoretical learning.
3. Broadens the student learning experience through community-based applied activities and enhances employability as more than the acquisition of skills, but rather as a set of achievements which combines academic learning and understanding about themselves, their values and aspirations, and the communities in which they live and study.

The provision thus developed spanned all three years of undergraduate study, shown below:

Illustration (a): ViC provision within degree programmes



Source: Green & Anderson, (2007)

The range of not-for-profit organisations for which students carry out volunteer activities include the Probation Service, Victim Support, Sure Start, the Citizens Advice Bureaux, Age Concern, schools and museums.

This embraces an holistic model of learning which enables integration of academic knowledge, development of skills and personal development, whilst students are able to develop critical understanding of the issues facing community and voluntary organisations, and the context in which they operate (Green & Anderson, 2010). The development of ViC modules across all three years of study is designed to offer a learning experience which is incremental, enabling a deeper critical knowledge and understanding over time. Embedding optional ViC modules was purposely developed to support and build upon the synergies between the volunteering and academic learning experience which was found in previous research to be an important part of the pedagogic practice. (Anderson & Keating, 2003; Matthews et al, 2005).

The significance of this credit-bearing development in a post-1992 institution cannot be overstated, since it supports students from low participation neighbourhoods as mentioned earlier, and who often combine studies with paid work and/or domestic responsibilities (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006b). Hence the strategic decision to accredit these activities at Wrottesley within the ViC programme in order that the learning – both academic and experiential - is fully embedded within the curriculum. Furthermore, the partnerships forged with the

communities in which students live and study can be a strategic component of the university's mission for community engagement. The service to the community that follows from this learning activity means that students become aware of social, economic and political issues in their communities, and become part of the solution to these challenges. This planned volunteering in the curriculum thus embodies the shift from 'service' to 'action' that Brewis (2014) identifies.

These initiatives still thrive today. HEACF funding was used to support further development with academic tutors leading the initiative from a Social Science perspective into an institutional wide one. Government policy direction, and HEACF funding, enabled the initiative to go university wide, developing a student volunteering brokerage service too, if students wished to take up volunteering opportunities without linking them to their university course. Thus a volunteer unit was established in 2002 (Green, 2003). As will be seen in chapter four the take-up of volunteering in the curriculum (ViC) (as well as extra-curricular volunteering activity) has grown.

It is to be noted that whilst accredited programmes of volunteering have proliferated across the institution, my current research focus concerns the ViC programme in one school (now faculty). These students are undertaking a range of subjects that are not directly vocational, and include Sociology, Social Policy, Criminology, Politics, History and Religious Studies.

The patterns of discourse of such policy directions, the resulting activities within HEIs, and the impact this has had on the student experience will all be explored. The significance of political interest and funding to develop some initiatives is important to the way in which these are developed within individual institutions.

The relationship between the state and higher education institutions has been undergoing major shifts in emphasis and funding in recent years. During the New Labour administrations, fees were raised to more than £3,000 a year for undergraduate study, and paved the way for the higher fees introduced by the Coalition government. The Coalition government implemented a number of recommendations from the Browne Report (Browne, 2010) which meant that from September 2012 students had to pay up to three times the amount of the then tuition fee (Coughlan, 2010). This transfer of the cost of higher education from the state to students is consistent within neoliberal ideology, and means that pressures of debt for students and their families rise in their priorities to obtain graduate level jobs in order to repay debts. At the same time, planned public spending on higher education was expected to reduce by £0.9 billion (18 per cent) in 2014/15 and £0.1 billion in 2015/16 (2 per cent) which is the biggest shake-up the sector has had in living memory (Bolton, 2014). Since the introduction of the TEF, the government has proposed that HEIs gaining a TEF award (Gold, Silver or Bronze) will be able to increase

their tuition fees (HEFCE, 2017). It is in this context that ViC has been operating.

I explore the connection between state policy drivers, and the influence these have in a specific institutional context. Institutional decisions about strategy with specific reference to the student volunteering experience in the higher education curriculum will be explored. The ways in which HEIs respond to these drivers, those of both the government and higher education funding bodies, impact upon the ways in which student community engagement is perceived and implemented within HEIs, and can influence curriculum development.

An important aim of this research is to examine the linkages between macro, meso and micro policy development, the discourses operating in the execution of curriculum development in the light of these, and the ways in which students interpret, and experience, their volunteering within this context. What are the messages being received by students about volunteering whilst at university? What are the motivations that drive their volunteering engagement? Is it predominantly self-interest? My research aims to unpack these links in ways which will help to understand these in terms of their impact upon student volunteers within the ViC provision. This examination and subsequent analysis will develop further understanding of the connections, impact and thinking about curriculum development of community-based volunteering and learning opportunities for students.

Conclusions

This research addresses gaps in the literature about student volunteering, and in particular about how the changing policy framework outlined in this chapter shapes the way higher education institutions interpret, offer, support and deliver such opportunities for students. This is particularly pertinent in the fast changing political and economic landscape, and the current relationship between government, HEIs and the voluntary sector. This chapter addresses the wider political context in which volunteering, and student volunteering, has been considered in recent decades, together with a profile of the institution in which the case study research has been conducted. Neoliberal thinking is at the forefront of national government policy directions, the marketization of higher education, the 'employability' agenda and the conflation of volunteering with work oriented outcomes. This in turn structures students as self-interested in their graduate employment prospects, and weakens the acknowledgment of the two-way reciprocal engagement with communities that it can serve.

The next chapter draws on academic and policy literature in order to examine the context in which the issues identified above connect with my research. This will include an overview of the theoretical framework through which the research data was examined.

Chapter three identifies my epistemological position, and explores the methodologies used for the study. The research design is accounted

for, identifying the range of research data drawn on for this study. This includes government policies for both the third sector and higher education; evidence drawn from senior management, Student Union personnel, and three cohorts of students in one HEI in England. My objectives in undertaking this research are to understand the linkages between policy and delivery, student experiences and the implications for their learning, and their future selves. The analysis of university and student union personnel interviews will be explored in chapter four and data drawn from the online student survey will be examined in chapter five. Summarising the key issues to be drawn from this data analysis, chapter six will allow for a discussion of the contribution to knowledge arising from this research, together with the implications for professional practice. My conclusions will account for the research process as a whole, identifying key issues emerging from the data analysis, and points of good practice to continue to strengthen the academic provision of student volunteering in higher education.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Having outlined the political and policy context in connection with the voluntary sector and thus the context in which university student volunteering sits, this chapter will explore literature relating to volunteers and volunteering, and in particular student volunteering in higher education. Over many years of teaching ViC, and carrying out empirical research, a wide range of relevant literature has been gathered. This literature will be considered here, followed by a focus on student volunteering activity in HEIs in order to contextualise the current research study. With particular reference to accredited student volunteering (ViC), literature concerning theoretical considerations of the learning experience within the context of community-based learning will be explored. These key areas form the basis upon which the analysis of the research data was conducted.

2.2. Non-HE volunteers: the broader context

The term volunteering and the way that it is being used in this study should be defined. The Citizenship Surveys carried out between 2001 and 2011 (National Archives, 2011) identify both *formal* and *informal* volunteering. Informal volunteering consists of those acts of helping out, as an unpaid

individual, those who are in need who are not relatives. Formal volunteering on the other hand consists of:

> Giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organisations to benefit other people or the environment (for example, the protection of wildlife or the improvement of public open spaces) (Low et al, 2007:11).

It is formal volunteering that is considered here, with evidence drawn from a number of surveys.

2.2.1. Who volunteers?

Most research cited here was carried out in the UK, and where it was not this will be noted. In terms of who volunteers, the data drawn from the Helping Out survey (Low et al, 2007) also revealed interesting differentials in demographic motivations, as Rochester et al (2010:128) point out:

- The youngest (16-24 year olds) and the oldest (65 and over) were more likely to cite meeting people as their reason for volunteering
- Young people (16-24 year olds) were also most likely to say they were looking for benefits to their career prospects from volunteering
- Older people volunteered because they had spare time and because it was part of their philosophy of life
- People from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those with long-term illness were more likely to cite religious belief than other groups, and
- Asian and Black volunteers were more likely to acknowledge that recognising a need in the community triggered their volunteering

An important finding is the evidence that females are more likely to volunteer than males. In a survey in 1998 by the Institute for Volunteering Research, 33 per cent of females were reported to

participate in volunteering against 23 per cent males (Smith, 1999) and research continues to confirm this general trend (Bussell & Forbes, 2001). An earlier survey of volunteering, in 1997, also showed a sharp fall in the participation rate of young people: a fall to 43 per cent compared to 55 per cent in 1991 (Smith,1998) and this helped to prompt the then New Labour government to develop the HEACF provision for university student volunteers, linking this to enhancing graduate employability. Indeed, the Helping Out survey (Low et al, 2007) showed further demographic variations, in that while participation rates were lower in the young age groups, they were also lower for those aged 65 and over at 53 per cent. The highest participation rates were amongst those groups aged between 35 and 64 as follows:

> 35-44 = 64% 45-54 = 58% 55-64 = 64%
> (Low et al, 2007:19)

2.2.2. Levels of volunteering activity

Surveys account for the level of volunteering activity, which can be broken down into three different types of volunteering, that of regular, occasional or episodic volunteering (Low et al, 2007). Regular volunteering is taken to mean activities undertaken at least once a month, the other two categories less frequently. The Low et al (2007:19) survey showed that:

> three-fifths (59%) of the sample had given any sort of help to an organisation, while two-fifths (39%) had helped on a regular basis.

and that over the last five years:

> 68% of the sample had given formal help in some way, while 45% could be classed as regular volunteers.

2.2.3. Motivations to volunteer

Much of the research literature accounts for motivations that volunteers identify as the reasons for their contributions. These can be broadly defined as being self-interested or altruistic (although a range of terminology is used in the literature, including egotistic, self-determination, intrinsic, instrumental, or extrinsic, selfless, self-sacrificing, community related (Rochester et al, 2010)). The terms self-interest and altruism will be used in this study. Altruistic volunteering can be defined as being the concern for the welfare or well-being of others rather than oneself. Self-interested reasons are those which can be defined as being self-serving, in that the volunteer has a pragmatic approach that is determined by practical consequences that are beneficial to the volunteer (Rochester et al, 2010). Surveys suggest both altruistic and self-interested motivations for volunteering activity (Low et al, 2007) but that 'concern for others and the community are key drivers for volunteers' (Rochester et al, 2010:127) with 53 per cent from the Helping Out survey (Low et al, 2007) stating that their motivations were to help people. Further evidence from the Low et al (2007) survey shows that self-interested motivations such as gaining new skills (19 per cent), career enhancement (7 per cent) and achieving a recognised qualification (2 per cent) appear very low on the reasons people give for volunteering. On the other hand, wanting to help people (53 per

cent), the cause is important to me (41 per cent), and recognised a need (29 per cent) appear as much more important to respondents. Altruistic motivations appear more highly than self-interest amongst volunteers in the general public. In much of the research studies under scrutiny here, there is a distinction between altruistic and self-interested volunteering motivations, and yet the evidence would suggest that they happily co-exist in most volunteers. The benefits of career prospects amongst the younger age group revealed are unsurprising, and are clearly perceived benefits that may accrue in the future (Bussell & Forbes, 2001). Volunteering for this group is therefore an investment in themselves as well as the community. The evidence however, suggests that this motivation is not singular, and that community engagement and being motivated by a particular cause are cited by younger volunteers too. Rochester et al (2010:129) go on to explore 'perceived trends from altruistic to individual motivations' but emphasise that evidence from Belgium (Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003) shows 'individualisation should not be equated with egotism; young people want greater choice, but it does not mean that they have less interest in solidarity' (Rochester et al, 2010:129). In what Hustinx & Lammertyn (2003:169/170) describe as 'the biographical consequences of late modernity' they assert that 'contemporary individuals are oscillating between collective and reflexive biographic sources of determination'.

An interesting consideration then, is the extent to which altruism prevails over individual self-interest. Smith, (1982:41) goes as far as arguing that volunteering:

> is not really altruistic, at base; it is firmly rooted in enlightened self-interest. This fact makes it possible to achieve, where vast numbers of utopian schemes that are theoretically rooted in human altruism are doomed to ultimate failure because genuine altruism, even in the relative sense, is a rare motivation in humans, individually or collectively.

It would then, be more appropriate to determine that relative altruism is always connected to an interest for the self, and that this connection is seamless. Nevertheless, much of the research examined in this chapter makes a distinction between the two, and this needs to be considered in the light of the research data analysed for this study. The suggestion here is that volunteers will want choices over their volunteering that make the activity meaningful for themselves, as well as benefiting the wider community (Bussell & Forbes, 2001).

On a wider scale, Anheier (2014) suggests that reasons to volunteer are often a combination of altruistic, self-interest and obligation motives. Religious belief and involvement in religious communities has been a significant factor in obligation motives, but Anheier (2014) suggests that this is in decline within parts of the developed world where secularisation has occurred. Musick & Wilson (2008) found that important factors that help to promote volunteering is being asked to take part, and the social circle that is inhabited. These are intrinsically linked through the need for social contact and to meet people, together with the satisfaction of knowing that society benefits from volunteering activity, as well as gaining experience that may assist in gaining employment. It should be noted too, that the literature examined here

tends to divide older and younger volunteers in terms of motivations, as Smith et al (2010:69) point out, 'young people volunteer for different motives and benefits than older people'. Motivations are indeed not static over the life course, but can and do change over time and circumstances (Rochester et al, 2010).

The research evidence looked at so far reveals that motivations are complex, and that altruism can never really be the only motivator. It will be seen in later chapters that these complexities remain in relation to the debates concerning student motivations to volunteer within the ViC programme.

What follows is a consideration of the literature that focuses specifically on student learning experiences, in particular the research evidence of the learning processes experienced when students volunteer in community settings.

2.3. University Student volunteering

The research literature examining student volunteering learning experiences is extensive, and growing. A summary of the key issues that emerge from this is explored here. This will be followed by examining the relevant key theoretical concepts in terms of accredited student learning in a volunteer setting.

2.3.1. General student volunteering

Research interest in student volunteering has been growing in recent years, largely as a result of national and global interest in expanding

provisions for undergraduate volunteers (Gray, 2011). Much of this literature is informed from large survey data, some of which are comparative across several countries. For example Gronlund et al (2011) carried out a cross-cultural comparison of the cultural motivations of students across 13 countries, while Smith et al (2010) undertook large scale research into motivations and benefits with 4,000 students across 5 countries. The student experience of volunteering, motivations and benefits, are usually the focus of this kind of research, but without closer reference to the political and institutional policy directions which have given rise to the growth of this activity. This is often true of surveys which focus on student volunteers in just one country. There is often a narrow focus on a particular aspect of student volunteering, such as levels of commitment of student volunteers (Hustinx et al, 2005) and civic engagement (Bringle et al, 2011). In the UK, national research has been undertaken across several HEIs (Matthews et al, 2005; Brewis et al, 2010). This growth in research is welcome and has added much to the knowledge and understanding of the issues facing students. These studies will often make reference to the growing phenomenon of student volunteering activity, and will sometimes note the links being made to graduate 'employability', but do not draw out the systemic links between national and institutional policy directions which position these student experiences in particular ways.

The more recent study conducted of student volunteering within English universities (Brewis et al, 2010) examined the significant contribution that students make in their volunteering activities, and identified a mix of motivations and benefits. What is interesting is the overwhelming evidence (95.4 per cent) of students claiming that 'improving things/helping people' (Brewis et al, 2010:37) was a very important or quite important motivation. The next category, that of developing skills, and therefore linked to graduate employment, scored 88 per cent. So a rather more balanced mixture of altruistic and self-interested reasons emerge. Brewis & Holdsworth (2011) report that university supported volunteering was received positively by students, and that they reflected more positively on the benefits that accrue, than the student volunteers who were not supported in their institution. However, this discussion does not examine the distinction between accredited volunteering and extra-curricular volunteering. Holdsworth (2010:422) identifies the UK lack of a

> cohesive vision about students' moral learning and what is emerging is a mixed bag of volunteering opportunities that make varied assumptions about what volunteering can achieve and who benefits.

Amongst traditionally young students at a Belgian university who move away from home to study, Hustinx et al (2005:535) found a 'bifurcated pattern of student commitment' where engagement in volunteering declines in students' priorities when students make the transition to university study. It is noted however, that, like many other studies of

student volunteering, it is extra-curricular activity that is being investigated by Hustinx et al (2005). Mohan (1994:340) argues that it is important to support students by providing the context for the activity, and to assess 'how well they can absorb the experience they have gained and reflect on it'. In a comparison of student volunteering across five countries, Smith et al (2010) found high levels of volunteering in each of the higher education institutions under scrutiny. Institutions in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and the USA took part in this study and Smith et al (2010) found that altruistic motivations scored more highly than did self-interest/career-related reasons. Similar evidence was found against notions of benefits to the student volunteers, in that the altruistic, value-driven benefits scored more highly than self-interested ones.

Benefits that accrue from non-accredited experiential learning include organisational experience, and developing key or transferable skills (Knight & Yorke, 2004). There is, however, a word of caution in laying claims to specific learning, as Harvey (1999:3) points out:

> Unless these external placements are heavily promoted and facilitated within an institution with an expectation, at programme level, that students become involved, institutions should not claim any employability development as a result.

Knight & Yorke (2004) and Little (2000) also warn that placement provision in and of itself is no guarantee of effective learning leading to employment. For effective learning to take place, tutor support and discussions about the learning processes, including reflection, are

needed for the development of cognitive skills and personal transferable skills. Knight & Yorke (2004:106) make the point that 'dedicated higher education staff are needed to facilitate and support the development of work-based learning'. Indeed, Blackwell et al (2001:282) articulate six characteristics of good practice for work experience in the undergraduate curriculum, which are 'purposefulness, quality monitoring, accreditation, assessment, a work experience portfolio, and reflection and articulation'. The goal of equipping students with transferable skills, and the ability to articulate and reflect on these in terms of the work-based, work-related, or volunteering experience, is less likely to be achieved if the emphasis is on finding the activity or placement, and not on the academic, citizenship and reflective learning. Classroom support for all of these aspects is important to develop skills for reflection on experiences carefully for the implications of certain actions (Mezirow, 1990; Boud & Solomons, 2001; Moon, 2004).

A conundrum in carrying out a literature search on university student volunteering is that some of the research applies to extra-curricular activity, some relates specifically to volunteering carried out as an elective part of their academic programme, as in service-learning or ViC, while some look at both forms. This does produce some confusion, and this is compounded when it is also labelled as work-related learning. This impacts on the ways in which all these forms of out-of-classroom learning are viewed within higher education, by staff, by

students, and by not-for-profit organisations. The concern here is that this conflation encourages a mis-use of language, and hence misunderstanding of the pedagogic rationale for community-based volunteering and learning. This can result in what Hart el al (2007) argue is the lack of value and respect placed on this form of learning by the academic community generally in respect to forms of learning outside the classroom. Greater clarity is needed to ensure that student volunteering generally, and ViC particularly, is recognised for what it is, rather than dismissed for what it is not. It is in the interests of those tutors who are actively engaged and committed to ViC that we are consistent with our use of terminology. The next sections move on to discuss specific forms of accredited volunteering in higher education.

2.3.2. Service-Learning

As identified in chapter one, student volunteering in the UK is not new. What is more recent is accrediting the learning gained through volunteering (ViC). In the United States of America, what is known as service-learning has a much longer and more sustained pedigree than in the UK. Bringle & Hatcher, (1996:222) define service-learning as:

> a credit-bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organised service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Service-learning is a major contribution to learning outside of the classroom in the USA, and in countries such as Canada, South Africa

and Australia (Hart et al, 2007; Parker et al, 2009). The balance between 'service' and 'learning' is a crucial factor in the delivery of higher education programmes. (Eyler & Giles, 1999) Where the goals for both the 'service' and the 'learning' elements are of equal standing, the benefits and value of the activity accrue to both student and community, and the notion of reciprocity is key to this process (Mohan, 1994; Pritchard, 2002; Deeley, 2010). This aspect is one of the operational ways that sets service-learning and ViC apart from other experiential learning options mentioned earlier. Work-based learning, work-related learning and work placements all focus on the one-way benefits that accrue to the student undertaking these, rather than reciprocal benefits for both parties (Boud & Solomons, 2001; Harvey, 2004-9; Deeley, 2010).

Hall et al (2004: 37) describe three elements to the service-learning process:

- Service experiences are connected with learning outcomes
- There is an opportunity for teacher-guided reflection on the service experience
- Student learning involves keeping journals of experience.

All three are contained in the model of ViC under scrutiny here. This kind of community activism can lead to increased interest in active critical citizenship, and Hall et al (2004:39) argue that 'for many American academics the ultimate goal for service-learning is social change'. This is at odds with neoliberal ideology, but persists in pursuing values that are not entirely individual or about self-interest.

What is significant about service-learning is the ethos of an active pedagogy, one that enhances learning experiences in community engagement and encourages civic participation (Butin, 2010; Furco & Billing, 2002; Hustinx et al, 2005).

> [The students]…moved from being passive recipients of information to problem solvers. In their reflections, they reported that it was here that the class came to life (Barnett et al, 2009: 124).

The emphasis within the literature on service-learning is on partnership and collaboration with benefits accruing not only to students, but to organisations in the community and to the university itself. Buys and Bursnall (2007:73) point out that this is 'a vital part of community growth'. Whilst they acknowledge the difficulties, i.e. that academics often lack respect for community engagement, and that communities can sometimes be reluctant to engage meaningfully with universities, nevertheless they claim that as and when this changes, benefits can accrue to all parties. These include:

> new insights and learning; better informed community practice; career enhancement for individuals involved with the partnership; improvement in the quality of teaching and learning; increased opportunity for student employment; additional funding and access to information' more frequent and higher-quality publications; and more rapid speed of internationalisation (Buys and Bursnall, 2007: 74)

2.3.3. Volunteering in the Curriculum (ViC)

Similar accredited programmes in the UK have been developed in recent decades, but on a much smaller scale than in the US. At the time of Matthews et al's (2005) research, it had been established at a handful of HEIs, including Wrottesley, Liverpool, Sheffield Hallam, Staffordshire and Birkbeck College, University of London. Hall et al (2004: 38) identify the following effects being experienced by those students who engage in their volunteering in this way:

- A majority of service-learning students reported that they learned more and were motivated to work harder than in regular classes
- A majority reported a deeper understanding of subject matter, and being able to apply material learned in class to real problems
- High quality placements (responsibilities and challenging work) resulted in reports of more student learning
- Where service-learning was well integrated through classroom focus and discussion, students were more likely to demonstrate greater issue knowledge, and give more complex analysis of problems.

As within the general volunteering population (discussed in section 2.2. above) learning new skills, and gaining work-related experience were cited as motivational factors for volunteering by younger students (Smith et al, 2010). Research literature accounts for the benefits of skills developed by younger student volunteers. Matthews et al (2005); Deeley (2010); Brewis et al, (2010) all account for the development of soft skills such as communication, increased social awareness, decision-

making, problem-solving and confidence. In themselves these are claimed by students to be positive in enhancing general employability and some identified the benefits of experience within a field of their chosen graduate careers (Brewis et al, 2010).

As with service-learning, the structured learning of both practical and theoretical perspectives is contained within the curriculum. Butin (2010:3) describes this as an 'active pedagogy committed to connecting theory and practice, schools and community, the cognitive and the ethical'. This is a distinctive measure of this form of out-of-classroom learning, and is structured within the set of pedagogical practices outlined in section 1.8 of chapter one. This provision offers the opportunity to learn and volunteer in each year of the undergraduate programme, in which structured learning develops over time. It is a significant feature which is lacking from extra-curricular forms of student volunteering activity.

Given the ethos, status and widening participation agenda of the institution of this case study, it was conceived that the development of the ViC programme would support the diverse student body to widen practical experiences and learning opportunities in order to make the most of their undergraduate years (Anderson & Green,2006; Mallman, 2017).

Hall & Hall (2000); Hall et al (2004); Matthews et al (2005) and Yarwood (2007) all account for two-way benefits and knowledge exchanges. Students are coming into not-for-profit organisations having

up-to-date experience in higher education, bringing with them academic knowledge that may be of value to the organisation.

> Having a student coming in and doing this kind of research is good for voluntary organisations, because it teaches them to manage a [student] researcher … and [it is] very often work that they would like to do but cannot see any way of getting done, can be done. And they also feel that they are helping the students (Hall & Hall, 2000: 36).

This offers the potential for benefits for all of the stakeholders, and does as much to enrich university-community engagement as it does for the enhancement of students' learning. As with research evidence from the USA (Eyler & Giles, 1999) one study in the UK (Matthews et al 2005) showed that when student volunteering was formalised in study programmes, social and value change is a key aspect of their experiences.

> A central component was the opportunity that the volunteering relationship offered for reflecting upon, confronting and challenging stereotypes and preconceptions of individuals and groups (Matthews et al, 2005:7).

Students frequently cited developing understanding for the points of view of others:

> You kind of develop a bit more empathy… specially the projects that we worked with which were in really quite run down areas, it kind of allows you to see from their point of view (Matthews et al, 2005: 7).

This research showed evidence that being able to break out of the bubble of the university classroom enabled students to become ‘less judgemental’ and to ‘see beyond labels’ (Matthews et al, 2005:8). Students are engaging with networks of people perhaps otherwise not encountered during their university years which can generate social capital, since there is a measure of integration between university and community. This, Matthews et al, (2005) note, is as true of students attending their local universities (such as is common at Wrottesley) as of students who move towns to study.

Similar claims are also made by Deeley (2010), teaching in a UK university, who uses the term service-learning in her study. She found that ‘all the students claimed that service-learning had changed them’ (Deeley, 2010:47) with one stating that ‘you realise that you’re a totally different person in the space of a couple of months’ (Deeley, 2010:49).

Thus the evidence discussed presents a holistic experience of learning and impacts as much upon personal development, and importantly, value change, as on employability enhancement.

The ViC programme purposely sets out the task of combining academic learning with practical experiential learning that supports employability in its widest sense (Knight & Yorke, 2004) and a host of other learning opportunities. The ViC model, in line with the pedagogic rationale outlined in the previous chapter, draws on the work of Yorke & Knight (2006) and the ‘USEM model in which employability is ‘seen as being

influenced by four broad and inter-related components' (Knight & Yorke, 2006:5). These are understanding, skilful practices, efficacy beliefs and metacognition.

Table 2: The USEM model of employability

Element	Explanation	Comments
Understanding of subject matter	Propositional knowledge in the form of mastery of the subject matter of the degree.	'Understanding' is preferred to 'knowledge because knowledge often confused with retention of information.
Skilful practices	What are often called 'generic skills' as well as subject-specific skills. These can be characterized as procedural knowledge.	Although 'skills' is a wider used term, it may be invalid. What are often called 'skills' are better seen as practices.
Efficacy beliefs	Belief that one generally can make some impact on situations and events.	Beliefs affect one's willingness to act. Associated with these self-theories are other beliefs about what sorts of persons we are and what we can do and can be.
Metacognition	Awareness of what one knows and can do, and of how one learns more.	'Reflection' which is a metacognitive process, is widely associated with superior performances.

Adapted from Knight & Yorke, 2004:38

Across the range of activities required of students participating in the ViC programme, development or acquisition of all of these areas are asked for in the tasks being undertaken. The rationale is that there is no distinction between education for life, and education for employment, in line with Knight & Yorke's (2004:22) comment that:

> we have no truck with 'education' or 'employability' thinking and we will keep arguing that good learning enhances career, citizenship and more besides.

2.4. Student volunteering and learning: theoretical perspectives

The evidence thus far demonstrates that students identify with altruistic motivations, and appreciate the benefits of being of use in the community, as well as a recognition of potential advantages to their own career prospects. What now follows is a discussion of a range of theoretical concepts for student learning which are relevant to student learning in a volunteer setting. The pedagogy behind the accredited student volunteering within the ViC programme will be theorised, setting out the connections between classroom learning and experiences of volunteering in a community setting.

2.4.1. Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998:3) describes the concept of communities of practice as a *'social theory of learning'* since, as social beings, our learning does not operate in a vacuum, but with, by, and through others in ways that carry meaning for all involved. As he points out:

> Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that they rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar (Wenger, 1998:7).

Illustration (b) Components of Communities of Practice

(Source: Wenger, 1998:5)

The components identified above are interconnected and are easily identifiable in a number of social settings – they can be found in families, at work, in educational and community settings, and as Wenger (1998:6) points out, *'we belong to several communities of practice at any given time'*.

It is this shared community of practice that students experience outside of the classroom when engaging in community volunteering activities. They are introduced to a different setting for their learning, understanding and development in ways that would not occur in the classroom. Students network with professionals, other volunteers, service users and peripheral agencies, which allows them to learn differently from conventional class-based learning. According to Wenger

(1998:5) the components identified in the diagram above, constitute a social theory of learning which integrates the following:

- Meaning: a way of talking about our (changing) ability – individually and collectively – to experience our life and the world as meaningful
- Practice: a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action
- Community: a way of talking about the social configurations in which our enterprises are defined as worth pursuing and our participation is recognisable as competence
- Identity: a way of talking about how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities

All of these themes constitute important processes in the art of 'becoming'. Wenger's (1998) work explores the ways in which learning is participatory as much as it is about acquiring knowledge. Colley et al (2007:474) acknowledge this debt to Lave & Wenger (1991) when they show that learning is 'social participation, rather than cognitive acquisition which enables newcomers to learn from more experienced practitioners and it is immediately bound up with the social context in which it is situated'. Becoming a graduate with a range of learning experiences outside the classroom then, involves what Colley et al (2007:471) describes as 'not only a 'sense' of how to be but also 'sensibility': requisite feelings and morals, and the capacity for emotional labour'.

Students are part of a community of practice within the higher education context in itself; student volunteers are then also exposed to a community of practice in an external setting beyond the classroom, in which they can meaningfully contribute, as well as sharing resources and accepted processes. This experience applies equally to both non-accredited and accredited volunteering. What is key to accredited student volunteering is that they develop a practice within the community setting, and have the opportunity to critically reflect on the setting, their activities, their decision-making and effectiveness in a classroom. It is within this context that classroom learning significantly contributes to this reflexive process, and contributes to identity development. In this way meanings are exposed and understood.

The applied learning comes from volunteering, but also in the contact with members of the community in particular ways, and exploring this together with academic tutors. Practical skills may be developed, such as interpersonal and communication skills, while delivering an appropriate and relevant service in a timely manner. The experience also offers the opportunity to reflect upon their engagement with social issues in whatever the current social, political, and economic context applies at any given time. This provides the space in which this learning links to disciplinary understandings of students' wider degree programmes.

2.4.1.2. Expansive Learning

Allied to Communities of Practice is the concept of expansive learning, a theory which 'puts the primacy on communities as learners' (Engestrom & Sannino (2010:2). Drawing on the work of Russian scholars such as Vygotsky, they have developed the theory of expansive learning which

> focuses on learning processes in which the very subject of learning is transformed from isolated individuals to collectives and networks (Engestrom & Sannino, 2010:5).

Much of the research on expansive learning has been conducted within working environments, and the connections between those and the environments and organisations in which students carry out their volunteering activities can be seen, in what Engestrom (2007: 24) describes as 'horizontal boundary-crossing encounters and subterranean trails of trust and social capital'. It is in this context that students' identity formation comes into being. It is that they are 'willing to see themselves in terms of a new identity, that is, to see themselves as the kind of a person who can learn, use, and value the new semiotic domain.' (Engestrom, 2007:36). This allies with Wenger's (1998:5) notion of 'how learning changes who we are and creates personal histories of becoming in the context of our communities', and is linked also to the concept of transformative learning (see section 2.4.4. below).

2.4.2 Social Capital

Several key theorists (Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988; 1990; Putnam, 1993; 1995; 2000) have developed and worked with the concept of social capital over the last thirty years or so. The concept has influenced political thinking in western democracies in developing social democratic policies. The term is used to suggest the extent to which there is an environment of trust, reciprocal networks and sociability in a given society. For Putnam (1993) social capital sheds light on levels of civic engagement:

> Social capital here refers to features of social organisation, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993:167*).*

This is key in considering student social action through the ViC programme, since volunteering within community networks helps the 'social glue for community cohesion' (Kearney, 2003:45). Thus the ViC programme offers university-community partnership working (Balloch & Taylor, 2001; Dhillon, 2009; 2015) as well as social, organisational and professional networking and learning opportunities for students. Social capital offers a way of understanding the connections we make in our social world that can empower us as social agents. Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:119) defines it thus:

> Social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

The literature identifies the benefits of social capital to be the social connectedness between people and organisations; the reciprocal actions that can generate trust, norms and networks; and the specific connection between social capital and volunteering.

Bourdieu (1986) is particularly interested in the way in which social capital supports the maintenance of social inequality, as an adjunct to his use of the concept of cultural capital, whereby accumulated cultural knowledge confers benefits to those who possess it. Coleman (1988; 1990), and Putnam (1993; 1995) on the other hand, contend that social capital not only benefits the powerful or elite in the maintenance of their social connectedness, but that it can be a resource for those who are from more deprived communities. As Field (2003:20) points out, Coleman argues that social capital is 'not limited to the powerful, but [can] also convey real benefits to poor and marginalised communities'. Coleman considers social capital to be a resource for good because, as Field (2003:20) explains, it 'involves the expectation of reciprocity'. Within the ViC programme, reciprocation comes in the form of the dual benefits that are given and received by both student volunteers and communities in which they contribute. It is this contention of reciprocity that has captured thinking within western democracies, when contemplating social capital in policy terms and embracing the notion of Third Way politics. Field (2003:118) cites Leadbeater (1997) to explain that

> some forms of Third Way thinking have presented social capital…as an alternative to social democratic welfare policies. …Investment in social capital is desirable because of its dividend: a stronger community, more able to look after itself, with stronger bonds of trust and co-operation.

However, as explored in chapter one, the irony of social capital within the context of austerity and Big Society thinking during the Coalition years is that with reduced capacity (and funding) in voluntary organisations it may be more difficult to offer students accredited volunteering opportunities, whilst the Welfare-to-Work programme expects unemployed recipients of welfare to take part in unpaid placements, some of these within the voluntary sector. Again the contradictions, and the blurring of labels, are present here when voluntary action is assumed to be unpaid work by the unemployed.

Putnam's (1993; 1995) work on social capital shows the range of resources available through the enhancement of social capital, and the resulting expectations of reciprocity that enables communication and co-operation. It is within this context that the benefits to university student volunteers is to enable a broadening of networks, getting to know professionals within structured not-for-profit settings, and experience organisational life whilst contributing to social capital.

These reciprocal benefits – evidence of social capital – have been identified in several research findings in the UK (Mohan, 1994; Pritchard, 2002; Deeley, 2010). The trust, norms and networks generated through social capital can have beneficial effects on both the

student volunteer and the organisation hosting them. This is one aspect of what can be regarded as the 'two-way street' of reciprocity:

> being out in the community, for one thing it's kind of breaking the stereotypes that some people may have about students…And also …students then come out at the end of their course with a greater sense of the community that surrounds them, and… have more of a moral kind of culture to carry on to whatever career they may have (Matthews et al, 2005:8).

Matthews et al (2005:7) found that social capital was enhanced in several important ways:

- provided extra resources and sources of knowledge for many voluntary organisations student volunteers
- enabled organisations to enhance their diversity profile
- student volunteers provided an important link between universities and the communities in which they are located
- provided students an opportunity of getting out of the student 'cocoon' or 'bubble' and connect with people of the city.
- Equally, those who were studying at their local university were able to access a range of social and cultural networks in the wider community that were new to them.

Research carried out by Onyx (2003:61) demonstrates that 'volunteering and social capital are empirically linked' and that mutual benefits are found in that volunteering helps to enhance social capital. Thus, reciprocity is at work, rather than an assumption of altruism flowing one way. Again this calls into question the dichotomy of altruism and intrinsic motivations, since these concepts would appear to be synonymous. Onyx (2003) makes four key points in developing this argument. Firstly, volunteers are community builders. Secondly, that they are instrumental in developing bonding, intra-community links. Her third claim is that they can be mediators within networks, and

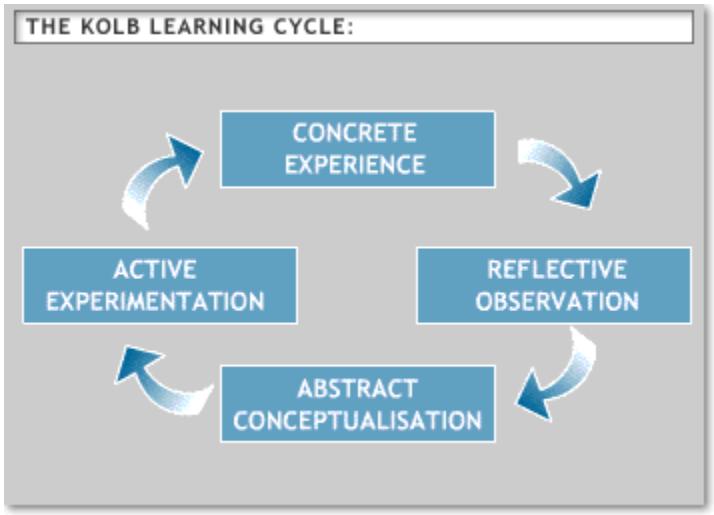
finally that they can also have a role in developing bridging networks across organisations.

Another benefit for student volunteers is to experience how social capital operates in community-based settings. The connectedness of staff, volunteers and service users coming together for a common purpose, bringing a sense of shared values, provides the opportunity to experience the 'glue' of social capital at first hand (Kearney, 2003). It is the classroom exposure to the theoretical concepts such as communities of practice and social capital that supports the development of knowledge and understanding, and thus the connection to their own practice in a community setting. This is the 'learning by doing' principle that connects theory to practice within this kind of curriculum development, and which marks out accredited student volunteering from other forms of student experiences outside the classroom, for example extra-curricular volunteering and work placements. This will be examined in more detail in subsequent chapters and in the experiential learning section below.

2.4.3 Experiential Learning

Kolb (1984) is well-known for developing the theoretical framework about how we learn through our experiences:

Illustration (c) Kolb Learning Cycle



Source: Kolb, 1995:42

Drawing on the work of educators such as John Dewey and Kurt Lewin, Kolb (1984:41) identified learning as *'the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience'*. He developed the four stage cycle of learning in order to identify both the stages of learning, and the learning styles of individuals. Each stage – concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation – are drawn on in order to embed the learning.

The underlying principle is that learning is solidified more successfully when there is a connection between education and personal experience. 'At the core of experiential learning, there is action' (Beaudin & Quick, 1995:2)

> All learning occurs in a particular social, cultural and political context and this influences what is learned and

> the ways in which it is learned (Weil & McGill, 1989:42).

This allies to what Lave & Wenger (1991:33) describe as 'situated learning' in which the learner is located holistically in the learning experience, not just in terms of geography, but also of 'the relational character of knowledge and learning, about the negotiated character of meaning, and about the concerned (engaged, dilemma-driven) nature of learning activity for the people involved' (Lave & Wenger, 1991:33).

Exposure to these theoretical frameworks provide the opportunity for students to consider their volunteering experiences in the light of these, and to develop a critical understanding of their situated learning. Reflection of the volunteering activity through an holistic approach is therefore encouraged because it seeks to develop knowledge and understanding of:

- The purpose of the volunteering activity
- The functions of a particular nfp organisation
- The political and economic context within which nfp organisations operate
- The progress of the student volunteer through their engagement with an organisation
- Skills used and developed
- Personal experiences which can lead to learning about oneself
- Academic knowledge and understanding.

2.4.4 Transformative Learning

This leads me to consider transformative learning theory. Mezirow (1990:1) argues that:

> learning may be defined as the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action.

Being supported to develop understanding and meaning of the volunteering experience through a wider theoretical and political lens, allows students to pursue a new interpretation of their learning which, for some at least, can become transformational – what Taylor (2000:157) describes as a deeper understanding of oneself, one's responsibility and one's capacity to act in the world. Holdsworth & Quinn (2012) examine two forms of learning that can occur when students volunteer. While 'reproductive' learning does not challenge the status quo they argue that:

> desconstructive learning allows for volunteer activities that reveal power structures and inequalities and thus create the conditions of their own critique…We hypothesise that this is the most valuable form of volunteering (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012:393).

This value lies in students being able to stand back from the activity to take a more critical interpretation of their experiences. The circumstances within which students engage with accredited volunteering modules make it possible for such transformative learning to take place. Mezirow (1997) identified a range of learning and teaching methods that support such learning. Included in these are the use of participation in social action, self-direction and critical incidents.

> These methods encourage critical reflection and experience in discourse. The focus is a discovery of the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way we think about their sources, nature and

> consequences, and on imagining alternative perspectives (Mezirow, 1997:11).

Support for this process is key. 'The learner may also have to be helped to transform his or her frame of reference to fully understand the experience' (Mezirow, 1997:10). Students are encouraged and supported to critically reflect upon experiences in order to clarify issues for themselves (Mezirow, 1990; Boud & Solomons, 2001; Moon, 2004). Thus a range of theoretical concerns frame this review of accredited student volunteering, and the context in which this takes place.

2.5. Current debates, current questions

The extent to which 'employability' is now foregrounded in the national political debates, as explored in chapter one, seems to have superseded policy attention to other forms of university learning. Academic learning and the development of the self within the wider social, political and economic contexts which form the backdrop to this learning is being sidelined in order to prioritise the economic value, both to the individual student and to the nation, of higher education provision. In this policy context the pedagogic rationale of accredited student volunteering is being eclipsed and drawn into the 'employability' debates.

Given the conflation over the use of labels, and the policy directions discussed in chapter one, this form of learning (ViC) sits within a contested space of learning opportunities for undergraduates. The issues presented in this chapter have informed the development of the

ViC model at Wrottesley, and it is pertinent to outline the key elements of the pedagogic rationale here:

- Accredited learning outcomes are aligned with practical and experiential volunteering activities within a not-for-profit organisation in the community
- Classroom support enables both theorising and understanding of social, political and economic issues faced in volunteering activities
- Students are supported by tutors to critically reflect upon their experiences in relation to their personal and self-development

These elements will be explored more fully in chapter five, when student responses are examined and analysed.

2.6. Conclusions

A wide range of literature has been examined here to explore the current context of accredited volunteering in higher education. This includes government sponsored research data, academic research concerning student volunteering, and theoretical perspectives which inform the model of ViC that has been developed at Wrottesley. It is to be noted that the conceptual framework through which volunteering has been largely discussed in the literature is restricting and the dual concepts of altruism and self-interest remain uncontested. Non-accredited volunteering, particularly within the higher educational context, is limiting without a supportive framework that promotes learning and critical reflection on the experience. On the other hand the ViC programme has been accredited with a clear pedagogic rationale that addresses experiential, academic and theoretical learning. This

enables the practical and applied experience of being ‘in the field’, learning at first hand of the issues facing not-for-profit organisations, their staff and service users in relation to employability in the sense that Knight & Yorke (2004) espouse. This provides the framework through which current research data will be analysed. What follows in the next chapter is an account of the methodological approaches used in this study.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will begin by examining the philosophical basis which informs my research approach. This will be followed by a discussion of the research design adopted, and the ethical issues considered when planning, executing and evaluating the research. Before considering these however, it is pertinent to be reminded of the key research questions that form the basis for this work.

1. How has the political and national policy context impacted on institutional responses to accredited volunteering in higher education?
2. What are the learning experiences of students undertaking volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?
3. What, if anything, do students value about the range of learning opportunities afforded by ViC?

3.2. Philosophical and professional context

It is important to examine my own structural position as an educator and researcher in higher education. This reflexivity will enable me to identify and examine the ontological basis and therefore, the epistemological framework through which my work has been based over thirty years of teaching and research. I will do this by exploring

the key issues and fundamental approach to this research, thus elucidating both ontological and epistemological approaches being taken.

My research over many years has focused extensively on the student experience in higher education, beginning in the late 1980s investigating the development of Access to Higher Education programmes that supported mature, ethnic minority or non-traditional students to prepare for study at degree level, and the implications for, and the experience of, such students coming into higher education (Webb et al, 1993; 1994). As an educator I was involved in establishing systems of curriculum development, validation and moderation of such programmes, now part of the Open College Network. Access to HE programmes develop accessible, supportive frameworks which aim to 'widen participation and access to high quality and flexible education, training and learning, to promote social inclusion and to ensure that learner achievement is recognised, valued and understood through a national framework of accreditation.' (NOCN, 2014). More recently, widening participation policies have provided both political and educational impetus for developing this work more broadly (HEFCE, 2015).

The aims of expanding access to a range of learning opportunities for learner achievement and broadening community engagement are central to my own professional roles as educator and researcher, both in terms of political and ideological commitment, and in developing

appropriate support and teaching strategies. 'Failure to be explicit in one's ontology merely results in the passive secretion of an implicit one' (Bhaskhar, 1998:642). It is, therefore, necessary to have explored the ontological influences that have shaped me as a person, an educator, and as a researcher. These in turn help to shape the kind of educational research I undertake, using particular methods for particular purposes. It is for this reason too, that I chose to undertake a professional doctorate. This 'significant new force in graduate education' (Bourner et al, 2001:77), that has developed in the UK over the last two decades, enables me to pursue an investigation of particular interest that will support my personal development, while bringing with it an opportunity to further develop professional practice. Rather than focusing almost exclusively on making a significant original contribution to knowledge as in conventional PhDs, the intention of professional doctorates is considerably broader in its learning outcomes (Bourner et al, 2001). As Bourner et al (2001:81) point out, 'professional doctorates are…attractive to those who view their own personal development and academic ambition as fully integrated with their own professional development and have a commitment to furthering the cause of their profession'. A professional doctoral research programme therefore enables me to combine academic interest in my professional practice of supporting students in community-based learning, whilst furthering my own personal development.

I now move on to a discussion of my epistemological position before turning to a detailed discussion of the methodological framework adopted as a result of the philosophical contexts outlined here.

Having been at the forefront of developing volunteering in the curriculum (ViC) I acknowledge my position vis-à-vis my research. I am situated within it by having been closely bound up with the creation, the accreditation, and delivery of ViC modules within higher education programmes. I am interested in the learning that students are able to acquire not just in the classroom, but in the communities outwith the institutional setting. It is this combination of classroom (for this we can read 'theory') and community (for this we can read 'real life or application') that is possible through this form of learning activity which is accredited within undergraduate programmes at Wrottesley.

I have been instrumental in the development of accredited programmes for volunteering activity and learning, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, which require students to undertake activities in the community, and bring these back into the classroom for academic study and analysis. My intention in conducting this research project is to understand the policy and processes through which such curriculum delivery is possible, to learn about the impact of this on the student experience, and also, importantly, to seek the implications for improvement of policy and delivery of ViC within my institution, work having been taken up by colleagues following my retirement. Such a declaration of my own position within the research and the institution,

identifies me as an 'insider-researcher' (Workman; 2007, Costley et al, 2010).

Thus the proximity of the researcher to the study needs to be recognised, acknowledged and examined. Therefore my dual position as educator and researcher is duly acknowledged here. As a qualitative researcher, Mies' idea of 'conscious partiality' (Mies, 1983:122) rather than any claim to the notion of value free research, sits comfortably with my relationship to my research. It is not sufficient to claim an objectivity that simply is not there. Cousin (2009) and Usher et al, (1997) as well as others, make the point that all research methods are:

> embedded in commitments to particular versions of the world (an ontology) and ways of knowing that world (an epistemology) implicitly held by the researcher…every ontology and epistemology is itself culturally specific, historically located and value-laden (Usher et al, 1997:176).

Stanley and Wise (1983:179) recognise the presence of the researcher thus:

> the researcher is always and inevitably present in the research. This exists whether openly stated or not…researchers must 'come out' in their writings.

There is little distance then, between the phenomenon being studied and my participation in it. Indeed, I have a keen interest in the development of ViC, and my relationship to this – and thus the emerging data – means that I need to examine this in the light of 'conscious partiality', since there can be both strengths and dangers of being in this position. Strengths include those of professional

expertise, insider knowledge, and understanding of the historical and current complex issues that form the backdrop to this curriculum development. Being responsible for this research can mean benefits that have application for future provision. As Murray & Lawrence (2000:9) note, practitioner-based enquiry 'derives from and informs the professional concerns of educators'. It can, as Costley et al (2010: 4) observe, have 'usefulness to the community of practice and to the individual researcher'. It links too, to Lave & Wenger's (1991) idea of situated learning. Just like my students, I am connected to the sites of our learning. A shared experience with students increases my awareness of the learning process and the need to contextualise this.

There are also dangers that need to be identified and explored. Of particular concern is the possibility that the insider position of the researcher may compromise recognised conventional research ethics. The subjective nature of researching my own practice may lead to a loss of impartiality. Knowledge of the course, students, anecdotes or other informally collected data may be mistakenly used as evidence during the research project. The distance between researcher and the researched is minimised in as much that I am long familiar with the environment and those participating in the research and they of course know me. Murray & Lawrence (2000) explore these and identify the range of researcher responsibilities that must protect the research process as a rigorous ethical enquiry. Whilst acknowledging my insider position vis-à-vis the research, and my own aims and objectives in

conducting this, it is nevertheless important to remain alert to both rights and responsibilities of the research process, and to engage in a spirit of open enquiry. Having been an active qualitative researcher for thirty years has helped in this, as does a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the British Sociological Association's statement of ethical practice which were available when the research was conducted (BSA 2002, 2004), as well as the British Educational Research Association's ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2011).

Bryman (2004) identifies values as important influences on the conduct of social research and the recognition that in recent years 'it is not feasible to keep the values that a researcher holds totally in check.' (Bryman, 2004:21). Feminist scholarship over the last thirty years or so, has contributed to the acknowledgment that no research, and no researcher, can be completely objective and value-free (Oakley,1981; Roberts, 1981, Finch, 1980). Thus, my position as researcher with considerable knowledge and experience in the field provides me 'insider' status. I am not coming to the research with little or no shared knowledge or experience. My standpoint is therefore an important research tool and I would argue that my proximity can encourage disclosure by research participants, all of whom are aware of my professional and research interests. This leads me to appreciate Harding's (1993) argument for standpoint epistemology in which there is a clear acknowledgement of social, political and historically specific contexts as to problemetise any position as objective researchers.

Feminist researchers have at times been discredited by mainstream researchers for being biased, one-sided, and political, (Eichler, 1988) but as Alcoff and Potter (1993:5) point out, 'all knowing will substantively involve the standpoint or social and historical context of particular knowers'. However, this does not mean, Harding (1993) continues, that objectivity should be abandoned altogether, or that, as Coffey and Atkinson (1996:11) point out 'qualitative research can be done in a careless rapture with no principled or disciplined thought whatsoever'. Rather, Harding (1993:69) suggests 'strong objectivity requires that scientists and their communities be integrated into democracy-advancing projects for scientific and epistemological reasons as well as moral and political ones.' Research attention therefore, must be paid to 'the task of critically identifying all of those broad, historical social desires, interests and values that have shaped the agendas, contexts, and results of the sciences much as they shape the rest of human affairs' (Harding, 1993:70). In the case of my own research then, it has been an important intention to examine the policies of governments and higher education institutions as well as the perceived experiences of those students who choose to undertake particular forms of learning, in order to generate new knowledge and understandings about the relationships, connectedness and distances, between them all.

In acknowledging my own insider researcher status, I am mindful of the responsibilities that this places on me in terms of data collection,

obligations to students, colleagues and managers. Being an insider researcher can also place me at an advantage in that I can use the knowledge thus gained to develop practice and enhance the learning experience of student volunteers within the curriculum. However, it also provides dilemmas which will be explored below, in sections 3.4.2, 3.4.3 and 3.6.1.

3.3. Methodology

My interest as a researcher stems from the way that policies, procedures and decision-making intersect with the student experience of learning within these structures, and the context in which these are played out. Bryman (2004:17) points out that:

> social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision.

My philosophical and political commitment to social justice is weaved through both my teaching and my research interests. So, from research into equal opportunities in higher education; non-traditional students in higher education (Webb et al, 1994; Webb & Green 1997; Green, 2001) the transition from higher education to employment (Matthews et al, 2009) to international students engaged in volunteer community-based learning (Green & Finn 2009); or the communal benefits of student volunteering (Anderson & Green, 2012) qualitative research remains a central focus for my work. Denzin and Lincoln

(2005:4) describe the qualitative researcher as 'bricoleur and quilt maker'. This is because such an approach does not privilege one method over another, but uses a range of methods in an attempt to develop a deep understanding of the issues under scrutiny. My research interest has been in seeking the qualitative responses of those engaged in, and experiencing, activities connected to the policies, curriculum delivery and experience of particular learning opportunities in higher education. Perceptions and experiences of processes are central to the outcome of particular policies, funding mechanisms, and curriculum delivery that emerge within a context that is often barely visible.

Within the ontological and epistemological background described, my research has been developed in a constructivist and interpretivist framework. The research questions that I wanted to seek answers for lent themselves to a framework consistent with policy analysis and qualitative methods of data collection. Educational institutions (or those that operate within them) are constantly evolving and developing the ways in which authority, rules, procedures and structures are continually negotiated, renegotiated and revised. 'The social order is in a constant state of change' (Bryman, 2004:17). We can see that the rules, procedures and structures that have influence over the conduct of HEIs are constantly changing, and are indeed currently facing the biggest shake-up of higher education delivery for a generation or more (Bolton, 2014). As noted in chapter one, the political and economic

climate of the Coalition government 2010-15 and the subsequent Conservative governments have delivered policy shifts of funding for higher education. These, following on from the Labour administrations of 1997-2010 have important implications for the focus of my research, for they determine the shifts in emphasis of how higher education is provided, experienced and received. It is important therefore, that the meanings attached to these social phenomena – in this case the national policy agenda which influences higher education delivery within institutions – are examined.

Knowledge claims, and research results, are therefore located in time and place, and not necessarily reproducible. What can be claimed is that this work can be 'generative of further understanding about the setting under investigation' (Cousin, 2009:6). Research knowledge is presented as a 'specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive. Knowledge is viewed as indeterminate' (Bryman, 2004:17). I would suggest that the research results are the result of those groups' responses to the issues before them, within the context of particular policies that framed these, and the result of their lived experiences and how they see the world.

Chapter four will show how HEIs and Wrottesley in particular, have responded to the political policy pressures of setting 'employability' as a key driver for student outputs, and thus the power and control lies with politicians and higher education providers. In this research therefore, it

is essential to seek out the perceptions and experiences of those whose voices are usually the least heard.

An interpretivist approach, according to Bryman (2004:13), 'respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action'. The distinction between humans and the natural order is acknowledging the hermeneutic tradition of the theory and method of interpreting human action. Within an interpretivist approach, the aim is not to attempt an explanation, but to understand human action. Interpretivism has its origins in Weber's work of a Verstehen approach (Bryman, 2004).

For me, knowledge is problematic (and therefore tentative) in that we cannot assert with any confidence that knowledge gained in one setting and in one time-frame can automatically be replicated or justified elsewhere, or that others will hold the same or similar views and beliefs. Key to this is Carey and Smith's (1993:249) explanation of this problematic nature:

> Conjectures derived from interpretive frameworks merit testing; the results constitute evidence for or against the interpretative framework and associated specific beliefs. Different people may draw different conclusions from the same perceptual experiences because they hold different theories that affect their interpretation of evidence. Reality exists, but our knowledge of it is elusive and uncertain. Theories are judged to be more or less useful, not strictly right or wrong.

Data capture and the systematic analysis will be about particular experiences at a particular time and in a particular place. Whilst replication of qualitative research is acknowledged to be difficult, validity is ensured by scrutiny of processes, data and analysis (Dey, 1993).

The focus of my academic work as a whole has been on the student experience, and coming to understand these in terms of their actions, decisions, and responses to their learning. Some of this has been explicitly for and about women learners while much more has examined access to learning and learning experiences more generally (Green, 1997; 2001; Webb et al, 1994). This is coupled with the possibilities for change, including curriculum innovation, extending the learning experience beyond the classroom, social inclusion and widening access (Green, 1997; 2001). Here an interpretative epistemological position, (and therefore qualitative in methodological approach) supports the kind of inquiry being undertaken, respecting as it does the role of meanings in human actions, and the need to share and to understand these. I will be consistent in this approach in the current focus of research.

Burgess (1984:2) explains that 'qualitative research allows researchers to get close to the data and provide opportunities for them to derive their concepts from the data that are gathered'. This qualitative framework is entirely consistent with developing theory 'derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research

process' (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:12) This, as Cousin (2009: 3) points out, allows the researcher to be 'thinking *with* the data as much as thinking *from* it (her emphasis). This creates an inductive method of working with data and its analysis. There is a body of knowledge in relation to student volunteering that already exists, with particular theoretical and methodological perspectives, and these have been explored in chapter two. These, together with an understanding of the recent historical and current research context, have provided the context from which this research was developed.

In adopting an inductive approach to the study, data was being analysed throughout the research process. Using a case study approach gave an opportunity to drill down further than previous research, in order to connect policy direction, both national and institutional, to the lived experiences of students participating in the ViC programme. This allows for an examination of continuity and contrasts, given the different stakeholders under scrutiny. The research process therefore remains within an interpretivist paradigm, and there are several analytical tools that have been useful. Along with some aspects of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2006), thematic analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Guest et al, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2013) has been helpful in determining themes that emerge directly from the qualitative data. Described as a 'flexible foundational method' by Braun & Clarke (2013:174) it is an approach in which identifying patterns and themes for analysis has proved pertinent to this research project. This

is because a combination of existing knowledge on the part of the researcher, and the desire for knowledge of the lived experiences of those undertaking ViC modules. 'Bottom-up and top-down approaches are often combined in one analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2013:178).

3.4. Research design and methods

As stated in chapter two, there has been a growth of interest in researching the voluntary sector and volunteering generally. This, in part, is as a response to the political and policy interest in the not-for-profit sectors. Research interest in student volunteering has grown in line with the attention that volunteering has received. As explored earlier, much of this research has focused on various aspects of the student volunteering journey, motivations and benefits. There has not been the same attention drawn to the policy links, both national and institutional, which have a bearing upon the ways in which this activity is experienced. Neither has sufficient distinction been made of the different ways in which university students volunteer, that is, via extra-curricular activity, or supported through curriculum based learning. In carrying out this study then, the macro level (national political and policy directions) combines with the meso level (institutional drivers) and micro levels (students perceptions and experiences) (Macionis & Plummer, 2002; Dysthe & Engelsen, 2011; Caldwell & Mays, 2012) of scrutiny in order to advance further the knowledge and understanding of how these three levels relate to each other and play an important part in the way that students receive the ViC programme of study.

The large scale surveys identified in chapter two prove to be superficial in what can be achieved in research such as this. While being useful in terms of setting out the landscape of volunteering, they have limitations in terms of teasing out the connections between macro state and institutional policy drivers and the particular experiences of students undertaking accredited volunteering. For the purposes of this research project there was a need to dig deeper in order to understand more fully the connection between policy and practice, the impact of policies determined by government (the macro level) and institutions (the meso level), and the perceptions and experiences of students undertaking ViC (the micro level). This gap informed the decision to adopt a qualitative research approach within an institutional case study. This decision was taken in order to explore in detail and in depth a specific case in order to answer the research questions identified earlier (Bryman, 2012). The unit in question is one higher education institution in a specific location in which ViC has been developed as an accredited part of undergraduate programmes across a number of disciplines and academic Schools. Using qualitative research methods identified in later sections of this chapter has inevitably meant taking an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. My case study can be likened to what Yin (2009:48) describes as a 'representative, or 'typical' case, although Bryman (2012:70) prefers the term 'exemplifying case', since it can exemplify 'a broader category of which it is a member'. So the unit in question here is a post-1992

higher education institution which exemplifies one of many such institutions. However, using a case study approach does not always lend itself to external validity, or to generalise to other cases, even if similar. This examination of a single unit has been conducted in order to engage in a theoretical analysis. What has emerged from this intense scrutiny has been, for this researcher at least, a surprise that the issue of 'employability' has become central during the investigation and subsequent to it. As Bryman (2012: 71) remarks, 'we may not always appreciate the nature and significance of a "case" until we have subjected it to detailed scrutiny.'

3.4.1. Documentation

Government policy determines the ways (in both political and financial terms) in which higher education is framed and delivered. The discourse surrounding such policies influences the direction and delivery of higher education curricula. I examine this evidence in order to understand the ways that particular versions, in particular circumstances, come to frame the delivery of such policies. I have identified a range of policy documents that have shaped student involvement in community volunteering since 1997.

The range of data sources used is as follows:

1. Policy decisions by government (and the political support for these) in relation to the voluntary sector

2. Policy decisions by government proposing particular initiatives in higher education.
3. HEFCE policy documentation and implementation following policy initiatives.
4. Institutional policy/decisions to follow through policy initiatives.
5. Statistical data about the student body as a whole at the University of Wrottesley.
6. Statistical data on participation rates of students undertaking ViC over a period of time.
7. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with senior members of university staff.
8. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with key staff members of the Student Union.
9. Qualitative survey (on-line using Surveyor) with students who choose to undertake accredited student volunteering within their programme of study.

The ways in which central policy initiatives, and the funding mechanisms which ensure their implementation, are put into operation in an individual institution – in this case Wrottesley, is also examined. This sets the parameters for the qualitative data used in this study. It is the paucity of research about the connections between the wider political, economic and social contexts and university volunteering activities that has been a weakness in other research on student volunteers. It has been often studied as an aspect of individual

experience without the understanding that these wider parameters have implications for policy and practice. (Brewis et al, 2010). It is because of this gap that this study has been undertaken in order to tease out meaning in terms of the lived experience of students undertaking the ViC programme of modules against the backdrop of these wider governmental and institutional policy concerns.

In chapter one a selection of government White papers, the policies developed by HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) for funding the HEACF (Higher Education Active Community Fund) was examined at the macro level of analysis. How these directives drive institutional policy is of crucial importance here, since it is in the construction, or interpretation, of these that shapes provision and offers a discourse about the provision itself. This next sections deals with the meso level of scrutiny in this study, that of the University of Wrottesley.

3.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

Interviews with senior management in the HEI were intended to unpack the meanings of institutional policy direction with regard to the support of student volunteering, particularly as part of the curriculum. These were organised as semi-structured interviews in order to focus on themes concerning community-based volunteering, but having the opportunity to be flexible and probe specific issues where it seemed to be a fruitful discussion. Bryman (2004:543) points out that the 'interviewer usually has some latitude to ask further questions in

response to what are seen as significant replies'. Four senior managers were interviewed, the first in December 2010. These were selected because of their seniority in the institution, and as such were key decision makers and policy drivers.

The sequence and timing of these did not go as originally planned since there were major changes in senior management just at the planning stage of preparing the interview schedule. In order to capture responses from two members of the Executive that were about to depart, interviews were quickly arranged before they left. A subsequent interview with a new member of senior management then had to wait until the interviewee was sufficiently in post to be able to comment.

With the imminent departure of one of the management team, it became necessary to arrange an interview quickly. This meant that there was no time to conduct a pilot interview. Indeed, this became the pilot. It was very soon clear that the structure of the questions was problematic (see appendix (i)). The interviewee, while having specific responsibilities for the academic portfolio and teaching and learning, had little knowledge of student volunteering generally, or of institutionally structured accredited volunteering in particular. Responses were often rhetorical, and the tables were turned on the interviewer; more questions about student volunteering were put to the interviewer than the other way round. Doing this deflected from the probing that the original interview schedule was intended to explore,

although it did expose the limited level of knowledge and understanding of ViC that this interviewee had. As a result of this experience, subsequent interviews were conducted using a revised schedule (see appendix (ii)).

Similarly, it was also decided to use the semi-structured interview method with two key staff members of the Students Union, using the revised schedule. The Students Union at Wrottesley started to encourage students to volunteer as part of extra-curricular activities, and developing strategies in order for them to do so. It was important to discover the background to this development, and to see if, and how, the Union have been influenced by wider policy drivers.

In chapter four these interviews are identified as follows, the numbering corresponding to the sequencing of interviews:

Senior university staff:	***Student Union personnel:***
Respondents U1; U2; U3 and U4	Respondents S1 and S2

3.4.3. Online student survey

In gathering student data an early intention was to compile an open ended structured questionnaire to distribute to students in paper format. Following an initial analysis of the data thus generated, it was

proposed that this was followed up with semi-structured interviews with a smaller number of self-referred students to pick up on further issues of interest. This has been the method used in previous research projects. However, it was recognised that with the growing use of technology by students, a detailed and rigorous online survey which included open-ended questions, could be delivered more quickly, and with the hope of rapid and numerous responses. I used Surveyor, the survey application available for use by research staff within the institution. An email was sent to all cohorts of students in the years under scrutiny, with a link which would take them to the survey (see appendix (iii) if they decided to participate. This research project was also announced and explained in classes.

The intention was to go beyond the sweep of larger student surveys that have taken place elsewhere (Smith et al, 2010; Matthews et al, 2005; Brewis et al, 2010) and to explore a deeper analysis of the ways that students understand, experience and relate to their learning experiences within the ViC programme. Open ended questions in a survey carry the possibilities of providing such rich data. An original intention to follow this up with semi-structured interviews did not proceed, firstly because it proved to be too time consuming, and secondly, because the data provided by the online survey proved to be rich in commentaries that encapsulated detailed responses to the open ended questions.

The rationale of providing data from three cohorts of study is to capture the responses, at a particular time, of the perceptions and experiences of students who had undertaken the first year volunteering module, *Volunteering in the Community.* The mapping of ViC provision set out in section 1.8. of chapter one, shows that the opportunity for accredited student engagement with not-for-profit sector organisations is available at all three levels of undergraduate study. As noted in chapter two, motivations can and do change over time (Rochester et al, 2010) and I wanted to explore if, and how, responses would change as students moved on through their three years of undergraduate study. The most recent cohort, having studied the ViC module in their first year of 2010-11 is cohort 1. Cohort 2 is made up of those students who were then completing their second year of undergraduate study, and cohort 3 were in their final year of study, having taken their first ViC module in 2008-09, and about to graduate.

Pie-charts in appendix (iv) show the age, gender and ethnicity make-up of each cohort through the three years under scrutiny. Student numbers for each cohort, together with survey response rate from the online survey is identified in the table below, by the cohort they were in for the level 4 (first year) module *Volunteering in the Community:*

Table 3: Student numbers on each cohort of the study:

Cohort	Module numbers	Gender	Response rate
Cohort 1 - 2010-11	173	134 females 39 males	23 responses: 27.4%
Cohort 2 - 2009-10	110	92 females 18 males	30 responses: 27%
Cohort 3 – 2008-09	84	79 females 5 males	7 responses: 4%

Source: Volunteering Unit, University of Wrottesley 2016

It was to be expected that the dominant age group is that between 18-25 with increasingly smaller numbers in the older age groups, and this is in line with student recruitment generally within the institution.

In cohort 1, there are 135 females to 39 males; in cohort 2 there are 92 females to 18 males, and in cohort 3 there are 79 females to 5 males. While my experience (and that of others – see Brewis et al, 2010; Holdsworth, 2010; Braime & Ruohonen, 2011) in this field had led me to expect a higher ratio of female to male students, nevertheless the level of difference revealed here surprised me. Overwhelmingly, female students dominate each of the cohorts, but it can be seen that the ratio of males to females increase slightly in each year of the three cohorts in this study. This trend is replicated in the general volunteering population (Rochester et al, 2010). Another factor to consider here is the evidence from HESA data (HESA 2015/16) that females are now in the majority of higher education study, and also

that females dominate the subject areas from which students have been drawn. Whilst HESA statistics are not available for the time period under scrutiny, it can be seen that female students dominate Social Studies (principally those areas from which students study the ViC programme under scrutiny here) by approximately two-thirds to one-third male (HESA 2015/16).

Not all of the 60 respondents answered those questions concerning social classification. Of those that did, the majority identified parental occupation status as being in the lower social economic positions identified by the Office for National Statistics (ONS,2005). A total of 22 declared caring responsibilities, and 30 were in some form of paid work whilst studying.

Ethnicity has been identified as black, Asian or white. Except for cohort 3 (2010-11), where black students represent only 18 per cent of the cohort, there is almost an even split between black, Asian and white students.

The opportunity to reflect on the student volunteering experience at different times from having studied the module for each of the cohorts, shows through in the data analysis to follow. I present the comments anonymously but as written in the online responses. As a researcher the intention is to present 'real data' and not to make any grammatical or spelling corrections.

3.5. Coding and Analysis

The process of coding is crucial in order to categorise and begin to make analytical sense of the gathered, but unstructured, research data. On the whole thematic analysis has been used here as the strategy in which to generate categories, codes and themes in order to make sense of the data. As Bryman (2016: 570) points out, thematic analysis 'is often influenced by grounded theory and which is often highly dependent on coding as a means of identifying the themes in the data'. Using the voices of students themselves allowed for the analysis to be conducted on themes emerging from these commentaries directly. This enabled a certain distancing from my role as an insider researcher, since the analysis was being drawn from real data, from the students themselves.

The audio recordings of the interviews with management and the Students Union were listened to many times, in order to submerge myself in the material. Subsequent transcription of the full interviews was laborious and time consuming, but worthwhile in terms of familiarising myself to hearing, reading and writing down the ensuing material. From the online survey of three cohorts of students, comment reports were generated from the survey tool in order that coding could take place (for an example see appendix (v)). An initial cycle of coding was conducted to identify meaningful words or phrases across all sets of qualitative data. From these a secondary cycle of

coding took place in which categories were drawn from the relationship between codes (see coding families in appendix (vi)).

An early dilemma was the decision whether or not to use a software package for the analysis of qualitative data. My research training was before such packages were generally available, and I began my research career coding manually using hard copy, post-it notes and coloured pens. Some years ago I had initial training on the NUD*IST software package and more recently on Atlas TI. Developing sufficient skills in learning new tools to undertake this process proved particularly time consuming however, and I decided that my cognitive efforts would be better spent using methods already familiar to me. Braun & Clarke (2013:204) support the idea that 'it's good to learn to code using a manual, hard-copy process, even if you eventually do it electronically'. A manual process of highlighting, annotating and identifying possible themes was used. Electronic assistance was used only to find words or phrases used by respondents, and this was carried out on Word.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Cousin (2009:17) points out that 'an ethical orientation supports the thoughtful conduct of the research process and the eventual credibility of the report'. Throughout this study I have maintained an ethical approach to all aspects of the research process, bearing in mind my ontological and interpretivist epistemological position. My concern is always about how the research is conducted and whether the results

will enable improvements in the professional practice of delivering ViC. It could be that the research benefits the practice of delivering the ViC programme, since new knowledge created can have implications for teaching. In turn of course, this will undoubtedly have an impact on future students and only time will tell if any such changes benefit them. It could also have wider implications within the university since new understandings of the student experience of ViC might be applied more broadly across curriculum delivery, given the policy directions concerning outcomes in higher education.

Within this context then, the research design needed a clear ethical framework that adheres to the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (BSA 2002, 2004) and the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Relevant and appropriate evidence was provided to CeDARE (Centre for the Developmental and Applied Research in Education) in the School of Education and approval given on 27 May 2010 (see appendix (vii)). The key issues under consideration are set out in the following sections.

3.6.1. Information about the research

All participants who agreed to take part in the study were informed of the aims and objectives of the research, and written consent obtained from all respondents who took part in interviews. Students who participated in the online survey were briefed about the research, and that consent would be deemed to have been given if they submitted

online responses. All participants were informed that, should they wish to, they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality and assurances of anonymity are important to this research process. While an analysis of the student respondents in terms of age range; gender and ethnicity have been taken into account, no names have been recorded in the analysis, or comments attributed in subsequent written work. I have been concerned that interview data collected from such a small number of respondents (four from university management, two from the Students Union) carries the risk of identification. This has been limited by referring to comments drawn from this form of data capture as U1; U2; U3; U4; and S1, S2 without identifying the institutional or union role of each of the respondents. Furthermore, since conducting the interviews, three of the senior university staff and both the Student Union personnel have now left the institution, so the possibility of identification has been reduced further.

All participants in the study were informed that all data capture (either paper based or electronic) has been stored in one central and secure place available only to the researcher.

3.7. Insider Researcher

I acknowledge my insider status here and in sections 3.2. and 3.4.2. of this chapter. Being an insider can be both a strength and weakness in conducting research, and this is certainly true for this project. I have witnessed the challenges, difficulties and achievements that students

experience when engaging in the ViC programme, and therefore have knowledge of the learning process they go through. Similarly, I have experienced the political and funding shifts that have occurred during the last thirty years, and have an insight into the ways in which this impacts upon the ability to deliver such a programme. As Greene (2014) points out, this pre-existing knowledge is an advantage as it means that these contextual understandings are not new to the researcher. This insider knowledge can also suggest a comfortable familiarity with those groups who are to be under scrutiny through qualitative research. In this case, access to those groups, and approaching them for the research has been relaxed and trouble-free. On the other hand, the risks are that these familiarities may hamper perceptions and analysis, and that this closeness may lead to assumptions based on this previous knowledge (Greene, 2014: Chavez, 2008). When conducting this research therefore, I had to be critically aware of the possibilities that assumptions on my part may hamper particular understandings of variations in the use of language, or nuances and assumptions on the part of those taking part in the investigation.

My experience has borne out at least some of these pros and cons. While knowledge and understanding of the ViC programme, its participants and the senior management of the institution helped to prepare the way towards planning the research with relevant questions to pursue, nevertheless two interviews proved somewhat problematic.

My own knowledge of the ViC programme was 'mined' by U1, which deflected from my own purpose of the interview, though it did reveal a significant gap in the knowledge of the interviewee concerned. The second interview was with the Student Union personnel S1, who disparaged the ViC programme without fully understanding the rationale and purpose behind it. My research role in both situations was to maintain professional distancing in order to record the knowledge and perceptions of those concerned, rather than being engaged as a practitioner.

3.8. Trustworthiness of findings

The term trustworthiness is taken as a measure of the quality of qualitative research and Bryman (2012) identifies four criteria that make up trustworthiness; those of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

The credibility of the research undertaken lies in the rigour adhered to in the research processes and protocols. Triangulation, which is further evidence of credibility, has taken place through the use of 'more than one method of source of data of social phenomena' (Bryman, 2012:392).

Since 'qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied' (Bryman, 2012:392) it is difficult to determine the extent to which transferability to other research contexts can be successful. As is

seen in this research, government and institutional policy and funding measures can determine what students are able to experience in the learning environment. It is not easy to determine the context in which future generations of students will experience the ViC model of volunteering. What this research has produced however, is thick description of the experiences of students participating in the ViC programme at the time of data collection.

Records have been kept during all stages of the research process in order to follow appropriate procedures and accounting. This has been in order to confirm dependability on the resulting analysis. Confirmability can be difficult to demonstrate in qualitative research, but nevertheless all processes have been conducted in good faith, notwithstanding that, as Bryman (2012:392) recognises, 'complete objectivity is impossible in social research'.

Given my pre-existing knowledge of the ViC programme and contextual political, economic and academic circumstances connected to it, it has been of particular importance that my analysis of government policy and funding directions have been drawn from documented evidence, ensuring rigour and authenticity. My subsequent analysis of institutional leadership has been based on interviews conducted with senior management and Students Union personnel. All interviews were transcribed in full, and the online survey with students was printed out for analysis. The subsequent data analysis is grounded in the original

data sets, providing ‘real data’ which provides a level of trustworthiness.

3.9. Limitations of research

On reflection there are several issues that have limited the extent of the research undertaken. Limitations due to the size and scope of the project, one of the key stakeholders – that of not-for-profit organisations across the region - has not been taken into account. It has to be said that without those partnerships, the enterprise of ViC would fail, as supportive not-for-profit organisations are vital to the ViC programme. As Dhillon (2009) points out, aspects of shared norms and values can enhance social capital in partnerships that are effective and sustainable. Such an investigation with those who provide the valuable learning experiences of volunteering in the community may help to illuminate the partnership working that is necessary to improve the relationship between students, institution and organisations.

The experience of using an online survey tool has been both beneficial and detrimental. The benefits have been that students responded quickly to the electronic request, and that it prompted a large amount of rich data. However, in an online survey such as this students were able to skip over certain questions, or select those which they chose to answer. An example is responses to questions about social background were not always provided, and therefore insufficient data meant that some gaps occurred on particular aspects of the study.

Students also had the option to identify themselves, i.e. to reveal name, age, gender, ability/disability and course being studied. So, whilst the majority (47 out of 60) did reveal identities and personal information, the missing 13 makes it difficult to compare and contrast responses in accordance with certain variables such as age, race, gender, etc.

It was disappointing to receive only 7 responses out of a potential 84 students in the 2008-09 cohort. Despite email encouragement and announcements in class, the response rate remained at 4 per cent. Conjecture as to the reasons for this limited response is that students may have been under pressure in their final year of study, or that the first year ViC module was taken two years prior to this study, and some may have felt that it was too long ago to remember the detail of their experiences.

Finally, there were a number of yes/no answers which revealed statistical information, but which could not be analysed further. For example, when the analysis was undertaken, question 2 'Did you do any volunteering before coming to university?' simply asked for a yes/no reply. With no qualitative comments to follow, it has not been able to identify those who said yes to this question. In hindsight, in conjunction with question 5 'Did you continue with your volunteering when the module finished?' it would have been useful to be able to correlate these questions. If many of those who volunteered previously were indeed those who continue, may point to what Matthews et al

(2005:10) describe as 'committed' volunteers, that is, those whose volunteering was habitual and were likely to remain lifelong volunteers. Alternatively, others who have said they had no volunteering experience but were continuing to volunteer, may become what Matthews et al (2005:11) describe as 'converted' volunteers for other reasons. On reflection it is a pity that it has not been possible to pursue these areas of analysis for the purpose of this thesis. These are limitations of the survey questions as currently constructed, and the responsibility is mine. Nonethless despite these limitations, new understandings of the conditions in which ViC has been developed and delivered have been arrived at, and this enables me to challenge the status quo of the limitations of the job-shop model of 'employability' that has been adopted by institutional policy management. From the evidence of Harvey et al (2002) and Knight & Yorke (2004; 2006) this narrow definition of 'employability' is not restricted to the case study institution. This study exemplifies what is happening in many other HEIs in terms of evidencing 'employability' in terms of graduate jobs. This research goes beyond, and adds to, existing studies of volunteering in providing rich data on student motivations, and learning experiences.

3.10. Reflections on the research process

As a practitioner for many years and also as a researcher, I have found at times that it has been somewhat difficult to separate the two. It has been challenging to keep these roles distinct in order to analyse the

data carefully and with respect and commitment to what has been said by all of the respondents in the research study. This has been a huge learning process, but one that I feel has justified the effort, inasmuch that the data analysis that emerges is stronger. Indeed, the analysis that has emerged, i.e. that 'employability' is such a strong policy determinant in much of the discourse, has been unexpected and therefore thought-provoking.

The role of insider-researcher has been challenging and demanding, as well as rewarding and satisfying. It has been perplexing to find that the pedagogic rationale for ViC is so little understood by those in senior management, as well as in the Students Union. This has been a huge challenge to the practitioner in me, in that I needed to distance myself from the ensuing data in order to prioritise the role of researcher and analyse it in the political, social and economic context needed. The methodological approach used has been consistent with my research aims in that qualitative research has been used to get to the heart of perceptions and understandings of a range of stakeholders involved in the process of policy making, supporting or experiencing the ViC programme. The uniqueness of this research is to link the macro, the meso and micro levels of scrutiny in order to connect data from students with that of government and institutional policy directions.

3.11. Conclusions

The methodological rationale, in terms of my philosophical approach has been explored here. A detailed summary of the context for the research process, and the research methods selected in line with such an epistemological approach has been provided. Ethical issues relating to data collection, confidentiality and management of data have been accounted for.

The next chapter will move from the macro level of analysis, to that of meso level to explore the research findings of institutional respondents. These comprise four senior institutional members of staff responsible for policy decision-making, and two key Student Union staff who deliver relevant policy directives and practical support to students. Chapter five will then go on to examine the findings from the online student survey at the micro level.

Chapter Four

Findings - Institutional data

4.1 Introduction

Having established in chapter two the literature framework through which the following data will be examined, and outlined the methodology used in chapter three, this chapter will examine data evidence that responds to the first research question:

> RQ1: How has the political and national policy context impacted on institutional responses to accredited volunteering in higher education?

Neoliberal ideology espouses individual attainment and as Morley (2001) and others make clear, an uneven labour market exists and students such as those at Wrottesley find themselves disadvantaged. When graduate 'employability' is prioritised as being high on both state and institutional policy agendas, universities such as Wrottesley are under substantial pressure to deliver on these policy demands relating to graduate 'employability', since the uneven labour market poses an even bigger challenge to these institutions than those of the Russell group. So HEIs, particularly post-1992 universities, have responded to political pressures to prioritise graduate 'employability' to make good the personal investment that students (and their families) make, and to contribute to the national economy (Morley, 2001; Harvey et al, 2002; Knight & Yorke, 2004).

To understand institutional policy responses in this case study, the empirical data gathered from one set of stakeholders, that of senior university managers and key Students Union personnel are examined and analysed in sections 4.4. and 4.5. of this chapter. The conceptual tool being used to explore this evidence is what Evans (2003:418) calls the 'surface features/outward forms of systems' which do not recognise the 'internally differentiated ways systems operate in practice'. Thus the 'policy as espoused', 'policy as enacted', and 'policy as experienced' (Evans, 2003:420) are all demonstrated here as a consequence of layered, and sometimes limited, thinking and planning.

4.2. Institutional policy context

As outlined in chapter one, at Wrottesley the HEACF initiative was received with enthusiasm and because of the existing lead on accredited student volunteering and the expertise already held by a handful of committed academic staff, the relatively unusual step was taken to develop more widely what was already happening in one academic school. It is considered unusual because, as mentioned in chapter one, the majority of institutions charged either their Careers Department, or more commonly their Students Union, to deliver the provision (Darwen & Rannard, 2011). Relationships already established by academic tutors at Wrottesley with a range of not-for-profit organisations across the region were no doubt going to be of benefit to the development of a wider volunteering programme. A paper by one committed academic member of staff identified a broad set of

contextualised issues for senior management to consider when responding to the HEACF initiative (Cameron, 2001). The twin aims of increasing volunteering *and* student employability are recognised, and these cohere with the political interests in civil society, communitarianism, and the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998). What is distinctive about HEACF, Cameron (2001:2) argues, is the 'realisation that voluntary sector organisations are very fertile learning environments' – something that was already being used across the Social Science disciplines in one school of the institution to offer the multiple benefits of academic learning, social action and practical experience through ViC. Cameron (2001:2) goes on to acknowledge the value of this learning and the academic link to the curriculum:

> experience to date suggests that embedding voluntary service in the curriculum in this way and relating it to mainstream academic concepts and theories make it attractive to committed students and safeguards it from being just another work experience exercise, or a soft option.

Cameron (2001:2) recognises however, that the government is:

> asking HEIs to undertake this task…with a substantial and mixed ideological agenda encompassing citizenship alongside vocational training, as well as meeting the shortfall in volunteering.

Thus the connection between volunteering and vocationalism and hence employability is indicated, and is further evidence of neoliberal policies in action (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Radice, 2013). This conflation at government policy level has important consequences for the way in

which student volunteering activity has been developed at many HEIs, and continues to skew the image, purpose and functioning of volunteering.

The evidence thus far exposes ever increasing pressure from a wealth of policy drivers in relation to graduate 'employability' and the connection with the economy, coming down from government to HEIs, as explored in chapter one. This means that Wrottesley needs to demonstrate the effectiveness of its institutional measures. In so doing, the policy as espoused by the institution is exposed by a narrow understanding of what is recognised as success (the job-shop model), notably by high employment scores in the DHLE survey. (Harvey, 2001; Knight & Yorke, 2003b).

> The enactment of policy takes place at different levels; national policies are espoused by the state, enacted by a profession and experienced by a community (Harris & Burn, 2011:247)

Wrottesley is responding to state policies, in turn determining institutional requirements that academic staff, the Students Union and indeed students take action on. The data examined in this chapter will expose the ways in which the policies as espoused play out in terms of the enactment and experience of these (Harris & Burn, 2011; Evans, 2003).

At Wrottesley, the recognition of the value of academic support for accredited student volunteering meant that ViC could expand provision,

and opportunities for brokering extra-curricular volunteering would be created too. A university wide unit was established in 2002 to develop and grow existing School based provision into institution wide activity. This unit was tasked with the following:

a) Establish brokerage services to support students undertaking extra-curricular volunteering activity
b) Establish institution wide policies and processes for the accreditation of volunteering modules across the university
c) determine day-to-day practices of linking student and staff volunteers to organisations
d) risk assessment, ethical and practical issues of collaborating with community and voluntary organisations
e) monitoring all activity and developments
f) expanding student provision across a number of interested schools across the institution. (Green,2003)

The table below charts the expansion of ViC provision during the years of data collection for this research, plus a snapshot of recent levels of activity:

TABLE 4: Student numbers on accredited volunteering modules:

2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2015-16
177	187	167	269	691

Source: Volunteering Unit, University of Wrottesley 2016

Note : these figures refer to ViC only, and do not include unaccredited volunteering.

As can be seen in Table 4 above, accredited volunteering at Wrottesley grew significantly throughout this time and continues to be a popular route through undergraduate study. This growth was due to the expansion from one disciplinary area, that of the Social Sciences in one

academic school, to accredited modules across the institution in subjects such as sport, law, education, and science.

Wrottesley was one of the first to build up a significant programme of accredited student volunteering as an important part of the undergraduate curriculum. Members of staff – both academic and administrative – were appointed to lead on, develop and co-ordinate this activity, and provide the expertise to support the learning experience of students.

This interest in student volunteering, and growth of activity has been mirrored in HEIs across England, although not all of the growth elsewhere was with accredited provision. (Matthews et al, 2005; Brewis et al, 2010; Holdsworth & Quinn, 2010). In the Brewis et al (2010) study, 63 per cent of students are recorded as formally volunteering whilst at university, and this represents a significant contribution to the community in which students live and study.

Having already established ViC before the arrival of the HEACF initiative, the institution was in a prime position to develop and expand this quickly. The policies of the New Labour governments (1997-2010) meant that the voluntary sector was increasingly seen as being a key player in civil society and welfare systems. The subsequent funding increases for the voluntary sector, and the services offered, meant even more scope for student volunteers to participate in an ever wider range of activities (Hall et al, 2004; Hawkins, 2008).

During the time of data collection for this study (2010-11) the Coalition government was in power and deficit reduction policies were firmly in place. As already mentioned in section 1.4 of chapter one, funding cuts to both public and voluntary sector organisations were swift and severe (NCVO, 2012). This had subsequent implications for the ways in which collaboration with not-for-profit organisations were organised, including how, and where, students were able to volunteer. For example, Sure Start Centres initiated by New Labour (Eisenstadt, 2011) had been popular organisations for students within the accredited programme at Wrottesley, particularly with those studying Sociology, Social Policy, and Social Care. The institution had good relationships with many of the centres across the region, and they welcomed support from our student volunteers. Within two years of the Coalition Government coming to power, however, these opportunities had dwindled (Sloam, 2012; Butler, 2013), and to date, no Wrottesley student has been able to volunteer at a Sure Start Centre. So this trickle-down effect is impacting upon student activity too. Another major provider of student volunteering opportunities has traditionally been Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABs). Popular amongst students studying Sociology, Social Policy, Criminology, Criminal Justice and Law, many students volunteered at various bureaux around the West Midlands. Severe financial cutbacks, particularly so in the Birmingham area (Gentleman, 2011; CAB, 2012) meant that these opportunities too, were diminished and so Wrottesley students lost out on meaningful engagement with an

organisation that was facing huge demand for its services at a time when many were struggling with debt, job losses, and homelessness. As the figures in chapter three indicate however, this has not diminished the thirst of students to undertake ViC.

The following section explores the context in which interviewees demonstrate their understanding and interpretation of these policy drivers and the work being done in the institution to respond to these, particularly in connection to ViC.

4.3. Institutional senior management

What emerges from the interviews with senior management personnel is clearly that volunteering, when it is considered, is linked largely to the benefits that it brings to students, and the chief benefit identified is that of graduate 'employability'. This is in line with what is termed in this thesis as the 'job-shop' model, where the focus is on the narrow definition of graduate 'employability'. This is a one-way value that chimes with the national discourse on the benefits of higher education, in that graduate level employment will accrue to those who pursue higher education (Department of Education, 2016). The proliferation of work on 'employability' strategies in the higher education sector in recent years signals this strong national policy thrust (Little, 2000, 2006; Little & Harvey, 2006; Knight & Yorke, 2004; Watts, 2006; Yorke, 2006).

Four personnel from senior management were interviewed. This was in order to gain a sense of the institutional responses to the wider political and university policy contexts, together with their knowledge and understanding of how this has been translated into institutional policy terms. Drilling down further, the delivery of volunteering in the curriculum (ViC) within the institution in which they have important policy and resource implications, has particular significance here.

Three interviewees were members of the Executive; that is, the Vice-Chancellor, a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and a new Vice-Chancellor appointed at the time of data collection. The seniority of these interviewees meant that they were key decision-makers for the institution, addressing such issues of policy directives; interpreting HEFCE decisions for the management and direction of the institution as a whole; allocation of HEFCE funds; learning and teaching; research and resource allocation. The fourth interviewee was, at the time of data collection, the Dean of the School in which the ViC initiative first took shape, and arguably held rather less power than the other three.

These interviews show an important difference in understanding. Two showed that, in broad general terms, they are 'in favour' of volunteering, and of student volunteering in particular, but with little knowledge of the existing practices within the institution. On the other hand, two demonstrate a clearer understanding of the issues under scrutiny, and their connectedness to the wider issues of higher education business more generally, together with their own

philosophical responses to them. I identify these themes as 'rhetorical understanding' and 'beyond rhetoric' and explore them below.

4.3.1. Rhetorical understanding

Institutional positioning was a key factor here for the discussion of wider contextual issues concerning student volunteering, and out of this three significant themes emerge.

Geographic location. The fact that the institution is strategically regionally based (i.e. that '*we have got a clear geographical area'* (U1); that *'the majority of our students come within the sort of the West Midlands/Staffs area'* and that we are *'very much a regional university'; 'very very embedded in the local community'* (U1) are all signifiers here for specific student participation.

Widening participation. The significance of the location, where a substantial proportion of our students are from underrepresented groups in local, low-participation neighbourhoods (Anderson and Green, 2012) is relevant when interviewees identify the institution's widening participation agenda. Again the comments were rhetorical in terms of the university engagement with widening participation, rather than any direct relevance to student volunteering. *'There's a lot of centralised policies right round widening participation' (U1); 'the role of the university in the city and in the region (U2);* and the potential threat to widening participation with funding cuts on the horizon: *'what does it*

mean to be a widening participation university particularly if there's no money in it…' (U1)

Employability. This was seen as a strong incentive, by both interviewees, for students to become volunteers whilst at university. [The] *'value added of a degree…not just getting a degree, it is opportunities for community engagement and volunteering and then how that contributes to employability skills and making you more employable and enhancing your experience'* (U1). The same respondent thought that, with the arrival of a huge increase of tuition fees, students will *'want some value-added and it will be things like the volunteering and helping them to articulate what they've got from the volunteering that makes them stand out in terms of getting a job'* (U1). A plea that volunteering *'helps them to learn some of the core employability skills that employers are always telling us students are no good at'* was made by the second interviewee (U2). For students to be able to identify, through a portfolio, volunteering experiences was recognised by this interviewee. *'…it's very important for having done this volunteering…because some employers do like to look at the portfolio to find out what students have done…'* (U2). It was pertinent that, with government and HEIs agendas now focusing on employability, the student experience of volunteering was added almost as an afterthought in this comment: *'this range of employability skills is very important. We're thinking about internships, incubation facilities*

and all the rest of it. But we really ought to mention volunteering as well. We mustn't forget that' (U2).

There is clearly a narrow 'job-shop' model of 'employability' operating within senior management thinking, without considering the bigger picture of linking volunteering to the curriculum, the learning and personal development that can thus ensue, or university-community engagement. From this rhetorical understanding of student volunteering in general, and of the ViC programme in particular, it is evident that it is seen only in connection to its contribution to the 'employability' agenda, which is acknowledged as a central policy pressure. It is with the arrival of a new senior managerial figure (see section 4.4.) that specific policy begins to emerge with the Student Union led activities of increasing student volunteerings, again linking the activity to an 'employability' agenda.

A fourth theme, of citizenship, briefly emerges from one of the respondents here. Comments such as *'I suppose it develops a more rounded individual doesn't it?'* and *'it gives people sort of a foundation for being active citizens which is important, and also there's the employability skills'* (U1) articulate the way in which this kind of opportunity might lend itself to other experiences, to personal development. *'…active citizen…that's not just good for the individual, you know that's about giving people a university education, and the fact that more people who go to university are much more likely to be active citizens.'* (U1). This discussion of citizenship learning ties in with

New Labour policy aims for universities linked to dual perspectives of connecting community and community cohesion (Balloch & Taylor, 2001).

Location and 'employability' are the dominant discourses, and central to this is the interviewees' recognition that volunteering activity has relevance for the student in terms of the narrow 'employability' agenda. This is informed by government policy pressures which have particular relevance to the post-1992 institutional status of Wrottesley. Little or no comment on any wider application to benefit community engagement and fostering university-community partnerships, or the learning activity particularly associated with the ViC programme is drawn out of these interviews.

The ViC programme of accredited volunteering appears to have been subsumed into the wider discourse of general student volunteering, with no differentiation considered between models operating within the institution. Thus at this meso level of analysis, it can be seen that tensions are created.

4.3.2. Beyond rhetoric

The following two interviews contrasted sharply with the rhetoric revealed in the previous section. These commentaries still focused on the knowledge and understanding of the post-1992 status of the university, but they were more nuanced, focusing on the role of the university being about *'establishing democratic civilised and inclusive*

society' (U4). This interviewee sees volunteering as part of the curriculum important to this endeavour because *'for students generally [it] is about putting things into the community and showing you can do things, and I think that's really important.'* (U4). This demonstrates a different understanding about this kind of student activity, in that the students' contribution to the community is recognised whilst not exploring the university-community dynamic of community connections.

Connecting to the community in which the university is located is clearly of importance for this interviewee:

> *It's fundamental. You know, the university's roots go back to the Robbins Report '63, and the whole concept and the introduction of polytechnics and you should never forget your roots. (U4).*

The consistency of this connection is as important as the level of connection - as U4 points out, *'you can't switch it on and switch it off. You can't do that with people's lives. So you need to commit.'*

This commitment however, had not been made explicit by institutional policy drivers that drew in student volunteering into wider initiatives for university-community engagement.

University-community engagement is complex, and more than a sum of its parts. Working with student volunteering contributing to not-for-profit groups and organisations is just one part of this complex relationship. As revealed in the interview with U4, there are active projects across the institution because of interested and committed individuals.

> Although we tend to think of collaborations as interactions between individuals, in fact, collaborations represent the interplay between systems (Todd et al, 1998:231 cited in Hart et al, 2007:184).

So the institution as a whole is represented by collaborative partnerships with organisations in the community whilst not necessarily being strategically connected to institutional structures, resources or levels of support. As U3 observed:

> *I see that it is unsystematically implanted in the institution and it isn't core to a lot of things that go on. Hence the change idea really, because ideally you might move that on so it was more core rather than less core, and more prevalent rather than less prevalent.*

This respondent clearly acknowledges the lack of strategic development, but this did not diminish the importance of mainstreaming accredited volunteering in the institution:

> *It's [volunteering] a massive boost or bonus to most of the key strategic priorities…I see it as potentially core to a lot of business in the university (U3).*

One of the concerns for this interviewee was the political and economic climate then facing students. The need to *'future-proof our students'* is prevalent, when *'a different world is developing, the welfare state is being questioned, there is a bigger global issue around finance and around the economy' (U3).* The need to look to '*civil society and informal arrangements and different kinds of social organisation'* U3 suggests, is because *'we're not setting students up to deal with the*

world as it's been, we're setting the students up to deal with the world which is yet to come'.

Evans (2003:416) talks of a 'world of uncertainty' in which students have to become 'active partners'. Also Barnett who was prescient in his work on 'learning for an unknown future' (2004:247), suggests that in order to cope with the 'rapidity in which a new world replaces the old', then a higher education curriculum may be insufficient if it concentrates on acquisition of two things: knowledge and skills. 'The outcomes, we have seen, characteristically lie neither in knowledge nor in skills: neither domain can carry the day in a world of uncertainty' (Barnett, 2004:258). A necessary addition to these two Barnett (2004:258) suggests, is sheer 'being' itself. Dispositions such as 'carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness' he suggests, are those that 'will yield the 'adaptability', 'flexibility' and 'self-reliance' that the corporate sector so often declares it looks for among its graduate employees. So these dispositions will have economic performative value' (Barnett, 2004:258/259) and as such resonate with what Colley et al (2007) explore in terms of sensibility.

What is interesting is that for both U3 and U4 this understanding was acknowledged, while making specific links to the then current political and economic context of the time. U3 acknowledged the political drivers around employability:

> *…it's [volunteering] a way out the box, in terms of also meeting certain external drivers around employability,... So there's that set of things around the political agenda (U3).*

The importance of student volunteering activity, including ViC, was stressed by U4:

> *…volunteering within the curriculum is important…They are about what is the purpose of higher education. One of the purposes of higher education is about establishing democratic civilised and inclusive society (U4).*

So for this respondent it is not just about 'employability, but part of the traditional purposes of higher education (Barnett, 1990; 1997, McArthur, 2011). However, this clarity also sits alongside connecting volunteering to work experience:

> *But I also think, and I'm very determined about this, is that all our students should engage in some form of work experience. Now work experience to me is valuable simply because of what you learn from it…I include volunteering within that broad concept of work experience and that's why it's important in the curriculum (U4).*

So the conflation of volunteering and 'employability', already seen in government policy direction for university students through HEACF, is now becoming clear within institutional policy agendas.

U4 was forthcoming on ways in which the institution can make a difference to the life chances of its students:

> *We're talking about students from significantly disadvantaged areas, we're talking about low income families, we're talking about improving life chances for those individuals (U4).*

> *We need to make sure that those…our students are the students that employers look for, that they have the graduate attributes….because, well, they deserve it (U4).*

'Employability' is signposted as being intrinsic to the provision of ViC but U4 recognises the structural inequalities that students at Wrottesley face, albeit in terms of a benefit to the individual rather than a community. This is echoed by the respondent U3 for whom accredited student volunteering was recognised as a '*massive boost'* for the 'employability' agenda. For this respondent, it is particularly of value in an institution such as Wrottesley, with its widening participation agenda, where the majority of students are first generation higher education students, come from working-class backgrounds and have a stake in improving their life chances:

> *That's a special connection for me in a university such as this because [Wrottesley] erm, has a particular relationship with the region. It's one of the economic catalysts for regeneration, wealth creation and the development of life chances (U3).*

To summarise then, across all institutional staff interviews, both location and 'employability' are dominant themes. The pressures to respond to national policy agendas for 'employability' are signalled by all four interviewees, and volunteering, both accredited and unaccredited forms, are drawn into this agenda. The key policy drivers are clearly around 'employability' and the pressure the institution faces to respond to the needs of the student body in terms of employment.

These discussions make it clear that the narrow, job-shop model of 'employability' is operating here, conflating employability with graduate employment.

Yet for U3 and U4 there is a more nuanced understanding of the recognition of student contribution to the community and the region via ViC, and that improvement of life chances goes a little beyond being reduced to 'employability'. It is with the then recent appointment of a new senior member of the university's Executive that the direction connecting volunteering to the graduate 'employability' policy agenda is made even more explicit, as explored below.

4.4. Student Union personnel

Two senior members of the Students Union were also interviewed, one who was employed by the Union as their activities co-ordinator, and the other who was the President of the Union, then soon to step down after two years in the post. The Students Union at Wrottesley did not receive HEACF funding, but in recent years has been encouraged by the institution to develop and enhance student volunteering activity. U4 noted that *'it's not uncommon for volunteering to be organised from the Students Union'.* The direction for the Students Union to get involved in student volunteering came from this senior management interviewee soon after arriving at Wrottesley:

> *I'm talking to the Students Union about getting them to encourage students to volunteer…giving them a performance target within their capitation fund. So we'll give them whatever the capitation fund is, and then*

> *we'll give them, I don't know, 10% extra if they hit a certain volunteering target (U4).*

As noted in section 4.3.2. above, U4 made it clear that this policy direction was intended to expand volunteering provision in the university because it was to include '*volunteering within that broad concept of work experience and that's why it's important in the curriculum'*. Thus the rhetoric of the 'job-shop' model is firmly in place in institutional thinking and policy direction.

S2 made clear the Union's response to this:

> *…one of our KPI's [key performance indicators] is to grow our volunteering and our student societies as well. So I suppose that – we have to adjust ourselves in order to fit our needs.*

Once again the conflation between volunteering and 'employability' is evident in the understanding of Student Union personnel:

> *The benefits of volunteering should be sort of like, made available and sort of let known to every student because of employability, and that's what it's all about (S2).*
>
> *Yeah, I think that – obviously the university is very, very focused on employability… So I think that what students are increasingly going to do is look towards volunteering to give them that experience (S1).*

This conflation is not surprising because of the developing institutional policy direction, and the introduction of a financial incentive. The message is further embedded by what was then the new 'employability' strategy, as explained by both Student Union personnel:

> *Well, the new strategic plan seems to outline it quite clearly… the plan for employability is that every student will be given a placement of some variety…and I don't see there's any way that this university can offer 23,000 placements in a 3 year cycle without some of those placements being volunteer roles…. It's to get you your work experience, it's the place that you get those skills (S1).*
>
> *You know it's [volunteering] in the new employability strategy [pause] yeah, which is good (S2).*

Volunteering is being assumed as another form of work experience in institutional policy terms, thereby reinforcing the connection for university management, Student Union, academic staff and of course, students. These assumptions are in line with, and indeed can be drawn from the macro level of analysis of the wider political policy direction outlined in chapter one. The job-shop model of 'employability' is seen to have been absorbed into the Students Union discourse also.

S1 demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the two-way benefits that student volunteering can bring to themselves and to the community supported, whilst clearly recognising the wider policy pressures brought to bear upon the university in terms of graduate 'employability':

> *I mean what's happening now is entirely employability driven…I think the university are using…are seeing volunteering [pause] and are selling it to students as work experience, which I think is more worrying….I think what the third sector want – and I think what we try and do a little bit more, as a union – although we are as guilty of it as the university in a lot of cases, is to try and sell it as what the students can give back to their community (S1).*

Student Union activity meant that two streams of volunteering now operated within the institution. The evidence from the two Students Union interviews show confusion, not to say resentment:

> *There's confusion, erm, with volunteering in the university because volunteering always used to sit within the student union, and then at some point the university took over volunteering and so the university have a big chunk of volunteering that used to be done by the university [sic - Union] (S1).*
>
> *A student just wants to volunteer and they don't really care or like…or even know, whether it's volunteering for the union or volunteering for the university. So my personal opinion is that volunteering should remain within the students union. Yet here we are, it sits within the university. Especially when you look at other universities and volunteering traditionally sits within the student union (S2).*

Just as with evidence from the senior staff interviews, the ViC programme is not acknowledged as being different from non-accredited volunteering by the Students Union, since knowledge about ViC was not forthcoming.

> *Erm [pause] I don't know anything about it. I know that if you want to volunteer, you go over to [Volunteer Unit], but I've never actually gone over there myself (S2).*

S1 confirmed a similar position:

> *I don't know because I don't know much about the volunteer modules to be honest (S1).*

S1 also goes on to reject the ViC programme:

> *It's an issue I have, personally, I know we try to move away from it, the union as well, is that idea that volunteering would ever be credit bearing,*

> *because as far as I'm concerned, if volunteering is credit bearing, it ceases to be volunteering (S1).*

Within the ViC programme academic credits are not gained for the volunteering alone as suggested here, but S1 also claims that:

> *I think what this university does is almost a beacon for what other universities are going to have to do (S1).*

Resources are scarce, and the Students Union are coming under pressure to increase their student volunteering activities in order to obtain financial reward. Power dynamics are being revealed, and competition for resources mean that unintended consequences come into play. The conflicts of interest between ViC and Students Union volunteering activities are therefore unsurprising,

The tensions that emerge are evidence of the power play at work when 'policies as espoused' (Evans, 2003:420) are tested through the enactment of these and experienced in unseen and unplanned ways. Competition and resentment between different sections of the institution were not envisaged or intended when the policy direction was espoused, but this micro study demonstrates these clearly. Policy decisions of the university mean that financial incentives were provided to increase volunteering within the Students Union, and that volunteering was to be included in a package intended as an opportunity to be available for every student to experience a work related setting. Since a further policy decision was to retain the Volunteer Unit and the ViC programme, it can be seen that the policies

as experienced have difficult and unintended consequences (Evans, 2003).

Pressures facing the Students Union are starkly reinforced by further comments from the union staff member responsible for student volunteering. While recognising the need for students to reflect upon their volunteering experience, it is clear that this cannot be delivered by the union:

> *If every student who came to talk to me about volunteering I gave the amount of time to that I give to those who really get the most out of it, I'd do nothing else and I would not have time either, you know, to do what it needs (S1).*

The inherent contradiction contained here is that S1 recognises the need for students to reflect on the experience in order to get the most out of it, yet confirms that the Students Union is unable to provide the necessary support to do this.

A wider understanding of the context of accredited student volunteering, and in particular the pedagogic rationale behind ViC was not evident in these interviews. There is also a lack of awareness of any wider government policy influences in these interviews with Student Union personnel. Student volunteering had become one of the activities that were being targeted as a key performance indicator in terms of block grant funding, and prioritised accordingly by the Union.

The financial downturn had impacted on the Students Union as well as the institution, and so competition for resources focused the energies of

Students Union personnel in order to meet its service delivery commitment to and on behalf of students. On the national stage, the NUS were renewing energies in respect to student volunteering (Ward, 2012)

4.5. Key themes in institutional perspectives

Government policies for students in higher education have increasingly prioritised graduate 'employability', and for HEIs, including Wrottesley, this has been taken to mean graduate employment, usually six months after graduation in accordance with the DHLE scores (Knight & Yorke, 2004). In this case study, it can be seen that this pressure has led senior management at Wrottesley to use a range of student activities to aid this agenda, including the ViC programme.

Notwithstanding this, most of the senior staff members interviewed expressed their belief that it was important for student development and to help their graduate employment prospects, although this was sometimes expressed in a generalised way:

> *Looking for something above and beyond getting a degree, I mean the assumption will be if you go to university you come out with a degree so they'll want some value-added and it will be things like the volunteering and helping them to articulate what they've got from the volunteering that makes them stand out in terms of getting a job. That will be important to the university, very, very important (U1).*

The emphasis here on graduate 'employability' acknowledges a 'value-addedness' through the volunteering experience, but does not address the distinction between accredited and non-accredited volunteering.

Overall, all four senior staff interviewees emphasised the post-1992 status of the university. These pressures intensify the focus that university senior management need to put on policy initiatives on graduate 'employability'. As can be seen in section 4.5. above, these pressures are also felt by the Students Union in the form of financial inducement to increase student volunteering activity. The implications for the ViC programme is that it is seen and understood institutionally as being beneficial to the student only, (the one-way street dimension of the job-shop model of volunteering) which is in line with the narrow definition of 'employability' being utilised within the institution.

Government policy discourse on 'employability' is driving this emphasis, and in so doing is also accountable for the collapsing of labels which describe student activities. There is little distinction here then for those activities which take place outside of the classroom, whether work-based learning, work placements, work experience, or volunteering. The key message being put out by university management and Students Union alike, is the one-way benefit to students in the form of enhanced 'employability'. Neoliberal policies are continuing to effect higher education delivery in terms of costly tuition fees, the burden of student debt, and the notion of the reward of graduate employment at the end of study (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Radice, 2013).

In this vein, the institution is proud to proclaim that the most recent Destination of Leavers of Higher Education Survey (DHLES) shows:

> Overall, 96.3% of graduates who graduated from the University of [Wrottesley] were in work or further study after they had left – outperforming the UK average for all universities and a record high for the University (Careers and Enterprise Department, University of Wrottesley 2017).

University rankings are ever more important for the recruitment of students, and it has been a distinctive trend in recent years that HEIs make a point of advertising good 'employability' rates to prospective students (Coughlan, 2017). However, as Knight & Yorke (2004:9) point out, 'employability, understood as suitability for graduate employment, is clearly not the same as graduate employment rates'. Graduate 'employability' here is equated with the relatively high success rates of graduates getting jobs within six months of graduating. This demonstrates a narrow understanding of 'employability' rather than the notion of suitability for graduate level employment as espoused by Knight & Yorke (2004; 2007).

The institution's decision to continue to support university wide volunteering through the Volunteer Unit (which includes the ViC programme) as well as to drive volunteering within the Student Union resulted in resentment and confusion. The unintended consequences thus emerging from policy decisions show the power dynamics of key players in the institution. Thus the target-driven agenda of 'employability', and of drawing general volunteering and ViC modules into this, sets up competition between distinctive sets of provision.

What Evans (2003:418) calls the 'surface features/outward forms of systems' do not recognise the 'internally differentiated ways systems operate in practice'. Thus the 'policy as espoused', 'policy as enacted', and 'policy as experienced' (Evans, 2003:420) are all demonstrated here as a consequence of layered, and sometimes limited, thinking and planning.

The disconnect between 'policies as espoused', 'policies as enacted', and 'policies as experienced' (Evans, 2003:420) has serious and potentially damaging consequences for the institution in terms of the inability to recognise the different goals and complexities and intended outcomes of different parts of the university. The lack of understanding of the ViC programme too, by both senior institutional management and the Students Union, limit the potential to capitalise on a wider set of outcomes than CV enhancement, or successful employment six months after graduation.

4.6. Conclusions

It is evident then, that general student volunteering, and ViC, developed at Wrottesley without being strategically incorporated into institutional policies regarding any wider initiatives for university-community engagement. No top-down institutional policy drivers were in place until relatively recently, and the Student Union were not involved in early developments. Wrottesley was one of the earliest institutions to implement accredited volunteering programmes, and the success of this initiative had been a key player in the decision to

support and develop this further once HEACF funding was forthcoming. One of the key success factors in community-university partnerships is a commitment from senior staff, which includes a shared vision about such collaborations in general (Dhillon, 2015; Watson, 2007; Hart et al, 2007; Darwen & Rannard, 2011). These shared visions are likely to be one of the key elements in developing and delivering strong messages both within the HEI and the wider community, validating the work of such community-university partnerships (Dhillon, 2015). An example of such strong support from the top is the CUPP project, established at Brighton University (Watson, 2007; Hart et al, 2007). Darwen and Rannard (2011:186) have pointed out that:

> those who would act as champions for student volunteering need a coherent strategy and vision for its development that is relevant to all sectors, connecting HEIs to business, the public and communities.

Nevertheless, successful partnerships with a wide range of not-for-profit organisations were built up at Wrottesley by the few committed staff responsible for the development of the ViC provision. When the national funding stream from HEACF became available, systems were put in place for brokering non-accredited volunteering student opportunities, as well as accredited activities through ViC. Given that the national policy agenda on 'employability' was being intensified, it is not surprising that institutional responses to a range of opportunities for students to gain experience outwith the classroom gained priority on narrow terms. Institutional rhetoric prioritised the 'employability' enhancement possibilities to students, and volunteering was accepted

by senior management and Students Union principally in this light. Institutional policy developments, identified by both senior management and student union personnel (particularly U1, S1 & S2), came in the form of the [Wrottesley] offer to every student to have the possibility of a placement (including volunteering) to enhance 'employability'. This has the effect of merging the image of volunteering with that of placements, work experience, and internships. This is potentially damaging to the image of the ViC programme, since the wider learning opportunities therein, and students' social action in the community is rendered invisible by this discourse.

In response to the first research question then, the evidence drawn on here shows that the political and national policy context in terms of graduate 'employability' has had an important impact on institutional policy drivers. 'Employability' has been prioritised at Wrottesley, and student volunteering activity has been drawn into this rhetoric, developed and promoted at institutional level. Some of the evidence presented here, particularly from U1 and U2, has shown that this has been, at times, in an accidental and accumulating way, and it has emerged as an activity specifically linked to the university's policy for 'employability'. This selection of policy priorities sidelines other potential outcomes for students such as the enhancement of learning, community engagement, and growing critical understanding of the political and economic context in which this activity is carried out. It also downgrades partnership strategies that can make connections to

the community in significant measures. In an institution such as Wrottesley, this is surprising since it has long been considered that connection to community is a strategic part of its mission, as made clear in the evidence from all four senior management staff interviews.

In the following chapter, an examination of the student experience of ViC will be explored. This evidence will be able to show if, and how, student perceptions and experience of ViC connects to, or contrasts with, this institutional picture.

Chapter Five

Findings - Student survey data

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter demonstrated how ViC has been subsumed into the 'employability' agenda (in the narrow sense of the term) by institutional managerial assumptions, specific policy commitments, and lack of critical knowledge and understanding of ViC. The macro level of analysis has shown that policy pressures have consequences for the ways in which institutional responses have used the ViC programme to further the narrow 'employability' agenda at the meso level. This chapter now turns to the micro level of analysis, and examines data drawn from the online student survey, focusing on the second and third research questions for this thesis:

- What are the learning experiences of students undertaking volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?
- What, if anything, do students value about the range of learning opportunities afforded by ViC?

There are two purposes to this task, in that the analysis in this chapter will examine the pedagogic practice within the ViC programme as experienced by students, and through this will challenge the dominance of the discourse of 'employability' demonstrated in the previous chapter.

As shown in chapter three, it is mainly female students in each cohort who take ViC modules, most of them young and with a smaller number of mature students. This greater female demographic is in line with the majority of studies of general and of university student volunteering, (Smith, 1999; Bussell & Forbes, 2001; Brewis et al, 2010). Consequentially, more responses come from female students. The gendering of volunteering is an interesting factor in and of itself, but it is beyond the remit of this research to explore here.

Proportionate to their numbers in each of the cohorts, there is little difference in uptake of volunteering modules between black, Asian and white students. Whilst the number of respondents was similar for cohorts 1 and 2, there were relatively few (7 out of 173) from cohort 3. Therefore proportionately fewer comments are drawn from this cohort. There are few instances where patterns of responses differ from different ethnic groups or cohorts, but where these occur they are identified and explored below.

The key themes drawn from the coding of student responses will be explored in this order:

- Motivations
- Reciprocity
- Benefits
- Agency
- Communities of Practice
- Social Capital

- Experiential Learning
- Transformative Learning

The order of these themes has been constructed in part using a grounded approach, taking the lead from the data as presented by students themselves, and in part by the analysis of the theoretical themes under scrutiny in chapter two. As will be seen in the commentary below, subthemes are developed for some of these, in order to tease out a more detailed analysis of student accounts. Where possible, student commentaries are drawn from across all cohorts, to get a sense of the breadth of responses. Where appropriate, student responses are analysed using Yorke & Knight's (2004) USEM model of employability, outlined in chapter two.

It will be noted, perhaps surprisingly, that the term employability itself does not emerge as a specific theme here. Students themselves rarely used this term (just 3 did, 1 in cohort 1 and 2 in cohort 2). However, employment permeates through so many of their accounts of the ViC experience that it is difficult to distinguish it as part of a separate and distinct discussion. This in itself is intriguing, and has emerged as an important and unexpected finding, since this would suggest students perceive and/or experience ViC with seamless connection between academic learning, experiential learning, and graduate employment. This correlates to what Knight & Yorke, (2004:22) proclaim, in that 'good learning enhances career, citizenship and more besides'.

In particular, cohorts 2 and 3 showed a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of their learning experiences than the dominant (narrow) discourse of 'employability' would suggest. What students present here is not the job-shop model discussed earlier, but an understanding that their experience of academic learning, their participation in the community through volunteering, and their practical experience of this, all present a seamless and blended learning experience with expectations of graduate employment following their studies.

5.2. Motivations for undertaking ViC

One of the interesting findings from this survey is the significance of prior volunteering before students entered higher education study. The survey undertaken for this research did not determine the origin of this early volunteering, whether through family, church or school or other social connections. However, it was welcomed by many students to be able to continue this activity and to undertake this within their undergraduate programme. The ViC provision confirmed to them that their volunteering contribution was valued in and of itself, and that it was formally recognised for the traction it gives to their studies.

5.2.1. Already volunteering before university

Over half of the respondents (38 out of 60) confirmed that they volunteered before entering university study. It is likely that the availability of ViC made it easier for them to utilise their existing

knowledge, experience and contacts to continue the activity whilst linking it to their studies. 16 (out of 23) of cohort 1 confirmed previous volunteering experience, as did 19 (out of 30) of cohort 2 and 3 (out of 7) of cohort 3. The vast majority did not proffer commentaries, but used a yes/no answer, so it has not been possible to profile the ages, ethnicity or gender of those who said yes. Just five qualitative comments emerged about previous volunteering experience in response to other questions (2 from cohort 1 and 3 from cohort 2) and as the quotation below shows, providing accredited learning space through volunteering offers a legitimate place for this activity within the academy:

> *I was volunteering for over 2 years before the module started but was able to give more time due to it being part of a module (76107, cohort 2, white female, 21).*

This evidence aligns with that of Matthews et al (2005:10) whose research suggests that there are 'committed' volunteers who 'incorporate volunteering in the curriculum as part of a 'career' of volunteering' and capitalise on their prior experience of volunteering to link it to their university course.

5.2.2. Experience linked to 'employability'

The majority of respondents (35 out of 60) referred to gaining experience as a key motivating factor in undertaking ViC. This term is clearly very broad, so close attention is needed to analyse the context in which this 'experience' is being discussed. This is explored in further detail below, in order of the most cited explanations.

Citing ‘experience’ in connection with employability is a concern across all age groups and cohorts, but it is noteworthy that comments about both ‘experience’ and ‘skills’ come from the first cohort, those students in their first year who were being introduced to learning in a university setting, and had just completed the first level ViC module. This is interesting, and it is conjectured that it may be that, for students arriving at university for their first year of study, they are concerned for their future and receiving strong and constant messages about graduate employment. However, it is also noted that this is a similar finding for those in surveys of general volunteering, (see section 2.2. of chapter two) in that:

> most young people (16-24 year olds) were also likely to say they were looking for benefits to their career prospects from volunteering (Rochester et al, 2010:128).

The acquisition of skills was mentioned across all ethnic groups, but by relatively few respondents at 13 out of 60. Conversely, discussion of skills was at the lowest from cohort 3, those then completing their final year. It might be considered that skills and graduate career progression would be much more of a focus for final year students; after all they are about to seek graduate employment, but this is not the case here. It is suggested that, for those who continue in the ViC programme during their undergraduate studies, this provides a ladder of learning that develops cognitive and theoretical knowledge and critical understanding of the experience. The pedagogic model espoused by the ViC programme does not separate out academic

learning and learning for employability but rather draws on an holistic model of learning (Knight & Yorke, 2004) which combines aspects of both.

The concept of skills is contentious (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006a) and there have been various attempts to define those which enhance employability (Harvey 1999; Knight & Yorke, 2004). References by students to generic skills development were by far the most common, such as *'to gain skills for the future' (75990. cohort 1, white female, 19)* or *'to get the skills and experience needed to be an asset and for my future' (76012, cohort 2, Asian female, 25).* As in Matthews et al's (2005) research, references to specific skills acquisition included soft skills, communication, IT skills, personal, transferable and organisational skills. Interestingly though, in the narratives such skills were not always specific to 'employability', and the quotation below draws out the holistic nature of personal growth. This is about the student becoming a graduate in the wider sense of development:

> *I also wanted to build on some interpersonal skills and soft skills as they are extremely valuable both in and after university (76000, cohort 1, Asian female, 19)*

Comments such as this respond to what Knight & Yorke (2004:38) describe as 'skilful practices' 'characterised as procedural knowledge', as part of the USEM model explored in chapter two. The quote above draws on a wider and more general understanding of these skills, and does not link them solely to 'employability'.

23 respondents, (17 from cohort 1, 4 from cohort 2 and 2 from cohort 3, made the link between their volunteering experience and future career prospects: *'… an extremely valuable experience* …[which]… *will help me with future career options (76000, cohort 1, ethnic minority female, 18)* [which made them]*…more employable (76066, cohort 2, white female, 42)* [it being]*… vital for those who have no experience in the field they wish to go into… (76044, cohort 3, Asian female, 29).*

Those students who do not have a specific career in mind are in the majority, and so express motivations in terms of generic skills and experience. However, across all three cohorts, a few students were able to link motivations for undertaking ViC in terms of career aspirations:

> *I also chose it for practical reasons of familiarising myself with the community and voluntary sectors, gaining valuable work experience, and networking with professionals and agencies with regards to possible future job opportunities, as well as additional references (76050, cohort 3, white female, 24).*

Here is an indication perhaps that a degree is not always seen as enough in prevailing labour market conditions, and that experience is recognised as valuable to achieve graduate employment. The neoliberal agenda 'constructs "employability" as a matter of individual attributes' (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006a:309) and, as explored in chapter one, post-1992 university graduates are entering a structurally differentiated labour market (Blasko et al, 2002; Harvey et al, 2006; Anderson & Green, 2006; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006a). This means that graduates

from Wrottesley can be seen as being disadvantaged by structural conditions outwith their control. Not only that, but as Mallman (2017) demonstrates, working-class students can also be disadvantaged by being less confident in a university setting.

Very few comments about employment prospects being motivations for undertaking ViC came from black students, who were more likely to specify 'community engagement' and 'experience' .

5.3. Reciprocity

It is clear from this evidence that connections to future graduate employment are an important motivating factor amongst these students. It is not the only one however. 29 out of the 60 respondents placed little or no emphasis on future employment prospects, instead citing motivations that include being able to contribute to the community and the reward that this brings to the student volunteer:

> *I like helping people and it gives me a lot of satisfaction' (75978, cohort 1, unidentified).*
>
> *Because I enjoy volunteering and helping the community and have been doing so for many years (76010, cohort 2, Asian female, 21).*

Indeed, reciprocity emerges as such an important benefit identified in student responses that it is not restricted to this section alone, but runs across a number of sections in this chapter. These commentaries counterbalance the view that self-interested motivation of improving human capital (and hence employment) is the primary driving force for

students studying ViC. As Bussell and Forbes (2001:244) point out, 'helping others has been found to be an important factor among volunteers of all ages: student volunteers and those over the age of 60'. It is important to note though, that evidence is not confined to binary opposites. Many who cited employment as an important motivation, also commented on other aspects experienced through ViC:

> *To improve my CV, gain work experience, also utilise my time wisely, helping those in need in the community (76051, cohort 2, black female, 43).*

As Rochester et al (2010) note, both altruistic and self-interested motivations for undertaking volunteering can and do co-exist. Moreover, as these respondents testify, they are presented as unified; as seamless expectations of and for themselves. The two-way benefits of giving and receiving are clearly visible here. This blurring of the lines between altruism and self-interest supports Smith's (1982) contention that altruism is rarely a single motivating factor.

To this understanding, Anheier (2014) adds obligation motives, which can be defined as being a moral imperitive to contribute to society and community. Examples of these are certainly evident from students:

> *I like giving back to those charities that have supported me, the only way was and always will be volunteer work (76022, cohort 2, white female, 24).*

Given that many students at Wrottesley are undertaking paid work at the same time as studying, or are parents with childcare and domestic responsibilities, the pressures of time are somewhat alleviated by

being able to experience volunteering as an embedded part of their studies. A win-win situation for some:

> *As a full time student, a father of 3, husband and part time working, time is short. Volunteering as an accredited module was a part of my studies, while contributing a service to my community, a win win scenario for me (76059, cohort 3, black male, 25).*

In an institution such as Wrottesley, it is integral to the widening participation agenda that opportunities should be available to all students. As explored in chapter one, financial support for higher education study by the state has dwindled with the removal of maintenance grants for the poorest students, and a large increase in tuition fees. Students such as those at Wrottesley are therefore less likely to be able to take up extra-curricular activities to gain experience and enhance their CV. As Moreau & Leathwood (2006b:37) point out, 'the impact of such policies [to reduce student support] is not equitable'. Having limited time for study means that programmes such as ViC can make the most of the opportunities available, and accredit the learning experience too.

As shown in chapter three, the majority of respondents identified themselves as being in the lower social economic positions recognised by the ONS, with a significant number also declaring caring responsibilities, and/or paid work whilst studying. There is no doubt that the 'win-win' scenario plays out for many of the students who participated in this study.

The evidence in this section demonstrates the strength of reciprocity as a motivating factor for students in taking ViC, and it is seen to be at least as important as graduate employment. Reciprocity is one of the pedagogical cornerstones of ViC and embedded in the curriculum. This important aspect of ViC provision is not recognised within the narrow discourse of 'employabiltiy' being used elsewhere.

5.4. Benefits of undertaking ViC

The evidence explored in 5.3 above gives weight to the range of reciprocal benefits that students themselves perceive in connection to undertaking ViC, in that they recognise the value of service to the community, whilst also acknowledging not only practical and self-interested benefits to themselves, but also the feel-good factor they experience through their community contributions.

One interesting finding is that a number of students cited 'enjoyment' as one of the benefits of undertaking volunteering through ViC. 6 from cohort 1, 5 from cohort 2, and 1 from cohort 3 all cited enjoyment as a benefit of participation. Interestingly, 4 of those in cohort 2 were also amongst those who were volunteers before entering university study. This latter group of students can be seen as belonging to what Matthews et al (2005:10) describe as 'committed' volunteers and will likely continue volunteering following graduation, blending it into their lifecourse.

Comments on enjoyment come from students in the younger age group, and mainly from Asian and white students, with just one female black student declaring her enjoyment of volunteering:

> *it has given me more motivation to help others in need and participate freely and i can say that i enjoy volunteering and meeting new people (76089, cohort 1, black female 21).*
>
> *I enjoyed it so much and enjoyed helping out even if it was not paid work (76010, cohort 2, Asian female, 21).*

Commentaries such as these can be said to evidence the support of widening participation students such as those studying at Wrottesley, which in turn helps the retention of such students, given the potential lack of confidence that Mallman (2017) describes.

Students identify many benefits, including enhanced learning experiences through combining volunteering experiences with theoretical learning in the classroom. Here students are acknowledging both tangible and intangible benefits that have the potential to impact not only on graduate careers but upon the ways in which they live their lives, connect to communities, and contribute to society. As is demonstrated in section 5.9 on social capital, there is evidence that student volunteering contributes to community cohesion, binding communities, organisations and individuals in beneficial ways (Kearney, 2003). As evidenced by students themselves, a range of benefits are both given and received. Dualistic concepts of altruism and self-interest in student volunteers in this case study do not hold up in the light of this evidence. This strengthens the argument that both can coexist

(Rochester et al, 2010; Low et al, 2007; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003), and blend into a seamless understanding and appreciation of learning while giving. While benefits may accrue to the volunteers' 'employability' prospects, nevertheless self-interest is rarely a single motivation, or viewed as a singular benefit (Bussell & Forbes, 2001).

The student commentaries add evidence of the rich complexity of the learning experiences of accredited volunteering above and beyond being an aid to graduate 'employability'. They show what can be termed a 'two-way street' where the benefits accrue not only to the student, but to individuals and organisations in the wider community:

> …if people just meet one student…who's actually helping the city rather than just taking out of the city, I think it benefits the community as a whole (Matthews et al, 2005:8).

The reciprocal benefits of service to the community and learning for the students, as identified by Boud & Solomons (2001), and Deeley (2010) and discussed in chapter two are clearly demonstrated here by students' responses. This is the holistic model of learning and employability that Harvey et al (2002) identifies in order to achieve both. Knight & Yorke (2004) remind us that there should be no distinction between education and employability and that good learning will enhance both.

5.5. Experiential learning

A question about the experiences of studying ViC compared to conventional class-based learning drew an interesting range of responses. The combination of practical application ('learning by doing') allied to theoretical learning in class is an intrinsic and therefore important part of the process of ViC for students, and connects to the experiential learning models discussed in chapter two (Boud & Solomons, 2001). This has been a theme in other research outputs (Hall et al, 2004; Matthews et al, 2005; Brewis et al, 2010; Anderson & Green, 2012) demonstrating its importance to students. The significance of linking experience to theoretical classroom learning is understood by students in a variety of ways, from being able to experience a 'hands-on' approach; gaining 'real-world' experience; being able to connect their own practice to the theory gained from the classroom setting. Thus experiential learning aids the 'understanding of subject matter ' (Knight & Yorke, 2004:38) in terms of the 'propositional knowledge in the form of mastery of the subject matter of the degree' since it adds practical depth to theoretical learning in the classroom.

A range of students across all cohorts and all ethnic groups recognised the link between practical, applied learning opportunities and the ability to return to the classroom to understand these experiences within a social/political/economic framework. As with the findings of Deeley (2010), students reported that 'learning by doing' created benefits in a

number of ways and to various stages of the process. Thus for the first example below it was because it was 'hands-on', whilst for the second student quote it was a gradual awareness of knowledge gained, and for the last it is the links between applied and theoretical forms of learning:

> *This form of learning gave you the hands on experience to help understand and cement all the knowledge you all [sic] in classroom based learning (75997, cohort 1, white female, 19).*
>
> *I was able to learn things gradually as i volunteered and this allowed me to progress in my knowledge and understanding of the course (76089, cohort 1, black female, 21).*
>
> *Able to experience what we study in class, put ideas, theories and policies into context. This is very important (76046, cohort 3, Asian female, 24).*

As Deeley (2010:47) points out from her small study of service learning, '[it] involves a combination of cognitive, affective and practical aspects which are connected and drawn together through critical reflection'. This holistic learning experience can involve the whole self.

This planned integration of theory and practice was recognised by some as being strengthened by classroom experiences that supported wider understanding and learning:

> *…this module was structured step by step with a few workshops which was ideal for the theory learning (76044, cohort 3, Asian female, 29).*
>
> *There were supportive workshops in addition to the volunteering hours within the organisation of choice. Therefore, there was an element of class-based learning as well as practice learning (76050, cohort 3, white female, 24).*

Others identified a positive experience of learning in a different setting that is part of the 'real world':

> *It provided learning about the 'real' world, rather than abstract topics. It also aided communications skills better, confidence in new places and in new roles and definitely made me feel more empowered to make the most of my degree (76032, cohort 2, white female, 21).*
>
> *It allowed me to see the practical implications that a policy can have upon the individual rather than what a text book outlines (76081, cohort 3, white female, 21).*

It is clear from these commentaries that these connections contribute to, and reinforce, an 'understanding of subject matter' (Knight & Yorke, 2004:38), as do the quotations below describing how the experiential and academic learning reinforce the sense of understanding.

More than half of the respondents (36 out of 60) across all three cohorts identified their experience of ViC as being intrinsically connected to their subject specific learning within their degree programme. This demonstrates that classroom contact is key for these learning experiences, shown here in three distinct ways. The first can be seen as learning in the classroom flowing out to enrich understanding of the volunteering experience:

> *By doing some of the modules on my course such as images of inequality, and understanding social care, I got some real life experiences to see and deal with situations such as stereotypes and creating an image of*

> *a person before getting to know them and their story (75997, cohort 1, white female, 22).*
>
> *We have covered topics on Housing, Health, Education and Social Security and these are some of the issues faced by asylum seekers and refugees (76051, cohort 2, black female, 43).*

but as this student, and the one following, goes on to say:

> *I was able to understand better what I studied in my modules by experiencing life experiences faced by different people (76051, cohort 2, black female, 43)*

It can also be said that the volunteering experience enhances the academic learning taking place in the classroom.

> *This module also helped with my other modules in Sociology such as research methods, contemporary families; racism in the British context (76090, cohort 2, Asian female, 39).*

It is the contention of the argument in this thesis that without underpinning the practical elements of the activity within the academic and scholarly context, students would be less able to demonstrate this richness of learning.

5.6. Agency

Classroom support for ViC is vital in the support for student learning and volunteering activities. A sense making process is interpreted by students and the following section explores these through the concept of 'agency', the means by which something is understood and/or accomplished. This is the empowering experience of being able to initiate actions and register the resulting achievements accordingly.

> *The experience of agency refers to the feeling that we control our own actions, and through them the outside world. In many contexts, sense of agency has strong implications for moral responsibility (Moretto et al, 2011:1847).*

Agency is revealed through two significant themes. The first is termed 'intrinsic agency' here, in which a sense that change, or agency, occurs within the student themselves, in that they recognise the experience as significant for themselves. Powerful acknowledgments by students of the change within themselves were made in terms of confidence, patience, reflection, desire to help, needing to be challenged. The following are just two of these testimonies:

> *It also aided communications skills better, confidence in new places and in new roles and definitely made me feel more empowered to make the most of my degree (76032, cohort 2, white female 21).*
>
> *I have decided that I need to be challenged. The charity I volunteered at previously was slightly laid back, where the CAB I feel will provide me with a challenge and open up more opportunities for me (74046, cohort 3, Asian female, 25).*

Such comments came from all ethnic groups, and while most are in the younger age group, it does include at least one mature student.

'Extrinsic agency' is the second theme to emerge, whereby the change process of the ViC experience has triggered an awareness and understanding of circumstances within the wider social, economic and political world.

> *This placement [sic] gave me an amazing awareness of the field of S.E.N [Special Educational Needs] and all the difficulties that everyone within this sector face. Something I was oblivious to beforehand (76032, white female 21).*
>
> *My volunteering\experience has changed my outlook on life, as it helped me understand different cultures, existing and changing demands, as well as main principles of working and working environment in a country different to my country of origin (76050, cohort 3, white female, 21).*

The participatory nature of these connections are meaningful for these students in the same way that Colley et al (2007) explore the sense of becoming a graduate. They also respond to the concept of metacognition in Knight & Yorke's (2004) USEM model, in that these students demonstrate a sensitivity of what they know, what they are aware of, and what they can do with this knowledge.

Interestingly some students recognised both structures of agency when making sense of their learning experience:

> *It gives me the strength to want to help other people that are less fortunate than me (75993, cohort 1, black female, 20).*
>
> *Volunteering gave me an opportunity to look 'on the other side' of life, and helped me see that giving help for 10 hours a week unpaid actually benefitted myself as I was giving something to a charity and helping them achieve success,… so my empathy for others and confidence grew. It shows that a few hours a week of a little help really does made a big impact and a big difference (76017, cohort 2, white female, 20).*

These two comments can be seen to relate to the 'efficacy beliefs' element of the USEM model, and as Knight & Yorke (2004:38) comment, 'associated with these self-theories are other beliefs about what sort of persons we are and what we can do and can be'. They can be seen as powerful messages about how these students are beginning to see themselves and what they can do.

5.7. Transformative Learning

Such agency is provided by the ViC programme in terms of being able to develop personal qualities and understandings. It is interesting to see that some students identify a transformative impact, not only upon their future graduate careers, but also in terms of their sense of themselves, their values and their place in the world. It can be seen that chapter two explored Mezirow's (1997:11) work of 'learning…making a new meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation and action'. The evidence from these two students showed how this experience had changed how they saw their future developing:

> *My outlook on life has changed, I would like to increase my involvement with helping people and I would now like to work with ex-offenders (75915, cohort 1, black female, 35).*
>
> *I only wanted to volunteer with [women's refuge] to keep my administration skills going but, after working (sic) within the refuge I now know I would like to work with women who have struggled in life (75916, cohort 1, black female, 48).*

Students here show their new, revised understanding of the issues dealt with through their volunteering, but more particularly how it has changed their understanding of themselves and consequently who they are becoming and what they want to do in relation to graduate employment. They demonstrate that higher education is transforming what they want to become, and this is in line with the seamless provision of both education *and* graduate employability that Knight & Yorke (2004) espouse. It is also in tune with Matthews et al's (2005) concept of 'value change', since students declare their intention to act upon these insights of themselves in particular ways.

Being *'inspired'* is a further example of such transformation:

> *Through finding out so much about the sector, it inspired me to want to help change and make a good contribution to the people involved. It really invoked empathy and passion for the sector (76032, cohort 2, white female 21).*

Aiding this student to think beyond themselves is another:

> *It helped me to think outside the 'me, myself and I' box. Life is all about what you do or can do for other people otherwise life is a waste of a lifetime. I can go on (76012, cohort 2, Asian female, 25).*

Neither of these declarations is about their own graduate employment, but about their 'graduateness', their employability in Knight & Yorke's (2004) sense of the term, and finding their own way in the world. Such individual attributes relate to what Hustinx & Lammertyn (2003:169/170) describe as 'young people want greater choice, but it

does not mean that they have less interest in solidarity'. The oscillation that Hustinx & Lammertyn (2003:169/170) speak of is 'between that of collective and reflexive sources of determination' and here demonstrates the part it plays in students becoming a graduate (Colley et al, 2007).

The ViC learning experience has enabled these students to understand more about their own responses to the current social, political and economic issues going on around them. In other words, 'the discovery of the context of ideas and the belief systems that shape the way we think about their sources, nature and consequences, and on imagining alternative perspectives' (Mezirow, 1997:11). This includes the student who, having knowledge and understanding about the current political, social and economic contexts that affect people, now declares that:

> *I now look at life differently. I am now more aware of what is going on around me especially when it comes to politics (which I never was keen on before) and the economics within society. E.g. looking at the current economic situation and being able to gauge how much people have been affected by the current economic situation (76009, cohort 1, black female, 42).*

The evidence from these commentaries, particularly the one above, indicate that 'deconstructive' volunteering learning, as explored in chapter two, is taking place (Holdsworth & Quinn, 2012). A more critical interpretation of their experience is taking place which impacts on the students' future graduate identities, and what they may go on to be and become.

5.8. Communities of Practice

Whilst students themselves do not employ the term 'Communities of Practice' as used by Wenger (1988), nevertheless their identified experience connects to the concept. Student testimony demonstrates below the ways in which they understand the *'social theory of learning*' (Wenger, 1998:3) and how this learning has developed them in various ways through contact with an external organisation. This has the effect of moving beyond academia and into a broader setting, thus making the connections between higher learning within the university and the wider society. For ViC students, their Community of Practice is enlarged from the learning community within the university by including contact with others in community organisations. Communities of practice widen the range of connections students have and this can include professionals, other volunteers, service users and others. The following are just some examples of where this has increased students' understanding of the community setting, beginning with a comment about local social issues:

> *Working with the community I have realised how a lot of people struggle with what most of us take for granted (75921, cohort 1, Asian female, 20).*

Teamwork is another way in which students connected to their Community of practice within the organisation:

> *Being part of a team, increasing communication skills (76057, cohort 1, Asian female, 20).*
>
> *I love working with the [organisation] they are a great team (75997, cohort 1, white female, 22).*

Experiencing community organisational practice and contributing to that practice was seen to be an important reciprocal benefit, both to the student and to the organisations concerned:

> *I view volunteering as an opportunity of meeting new people with different ideas and experiences. This would afford me a chance of getting to know first hand information on the changes occurring in the voluntary sector (76169, cohort 2, unidentified).*
>
> *I feel community groups are important and makes one aware what is happening in the community and how people can help to support and make that community a better place for the future (76107, cohort 2, white female, 21).*
>
> *I was given the chance in playing an active role in the improvement and involvement of a local community… Overall, this module enabled me to spend more time with a community organisation…(76046, cohort 3, Asian female, 24).*

The elements of Communities of Practice referred to in illustration (b) in chapter two, can be seen in many of these examples, and include those of belonging; meaning; identity; learning as doing; practice; learning as experience; community; learning as becoming. Seeing professionals, service users, and other fellow volunteers engaged in appropriate activities can widen understanding of roles within organisations, and a shared understanding of the contribution of each. Furthermore, as the research by Matthews et al (2005:8) avers, 'those who were studying at their local university were able to access a range of social and cultural networks in the wider community that were new to them'.

There is the added advantage that for ViC students, they become a Community of Practice in their own right by joining together in the classroom so that their own experience of a community setting is shared with others. This is a significant factor in the pedagogic practice within the ViC programme. This practice of learning and academic support within a community of student volunteers is not available in the same way for students who volunteer outwith the accredited programme (Brewis et al, 2010).

It can be argued here that the Communities of Practice being forged are being advanced further by the inclusion of university students in those environments, since, as evidenced in the work of Matthews et al, (2005) knowledge exchange can occur between these stakeholders, and again the two-way benefits are being developed. In other words, the social 'glue' explored by Kearney (2003) works to help cement bonds between university and community.

5.9. Social Capital

The concept of social capital has meaning for students undertaking ViC. Social capital, as explored in section 2.4.2. of chapter two is recognised when social organisations benefit from reciprocity, trust, norms and networks, resulting in coordinated actions (Putnam, 1993; 2000).

The contribution of volunteers to the enhancement of social capital cannot be ignored, as Onyx (2003:59) has pointed out:

> There is a growing recognition of the role of social capital in maintaining a healthy and vibrant civil society. Volunteering is a core component of social capital.

It is in the process of volunteering that this activity demonstrates the trust, bonding and networking that communities benefit from. Kearney (2003:45) too, identifies the ways in which the impact of volunteering helps the 'social glue for community cohesion'. These include combating social exclusion, fostering and developing a sense of citizenship and empowering the volunteer. For the ViC student volunteer, this empowerment can include an engagement in the democratic process more widely, as evidenced by the student who declared that she had more awareness now *'of what is going on around me especially when it comes to politics'* (76009, black female, 25).

It can be argued that social capital can be generated by the process of a university, student volunteers and community organisations coming together for the mutual benefits of community engagement, shared learning and social action in reciprocal arrangements that have been fostered over many years. This form of partnership working has the potential of enhancing social capital to sustain and support mutually beneficial relationships (Dhillon,2015).

The benefits to all of these stakeholders are many, but that of trust is a key component of social capital. Trust between the university, community organisations and students can go a long way to enhance

the university's mission of community engagement and enhancement (Dhillon, 2015).

Social capital is demonstrated by students in a wide range of examples, only occasionally by naming the concept. Connecting classroom based learning with the voluntary activity, this student identified:

> *Concepts of social capital and how the charity addressed such issues. The charity aimed to increase the social capital of its clientele. However, I also learnt how the charity enthused concepts of social capital in different aspects (bridging and bonding – Putman). The module helped put into context deep rooted meaning of what I have studied on my course such as; poverty, social exclusion, concept of community, social policies, funding and cuts. Overall, this module enabled me to spend more time with a community organisation and gave me a deeper understanding of my studies at university (76046, cohort 3, Asian female, 24).*

This quotation alone would seem to sum up the pedagogic rationale for the ViC programme, in its declaration of combining the theoretical with the practical and learning is contained in both. It is perhaps telling that it came from a final year student who was able to underpin the ViC experience with a theoretical understanding over time, and resonates with Knight & Yorke's (2004:38) 'understanding of subject matter'.

For these students it is not just understanding how and why social capital operates within associations, but how their own contribution can make a difference to this, particularly as they become comfortable in the milieu:

> *It has allowed me to focus upon different social groups and classes differing in age, gender and race and has given me a general understanding of the volunteering community (76089, cohort 1, black female, 21).*
>
> *It has given me the confidence to help out in other community based activities and volunteering elsewhere (75921, cohort 1, Asian female, 20).*

Overall, these student commentaries point to an increasing awareness of the context within which volunteering activities are undertaken, as well as a growing confidence in students' own abilities to contribute to the community whilst enhancing their own personal and professional development.

5.10. Conclusion

This micro level of analysis shows the richness of evidence of learning experienced by students who have undertaken ViC. Many demonstrate the motivation for this learning as a possible enabler of subsequent graduate employment. However, this is accompanied by a range of other, equally important, motivations such as the enjoyment and satisfaction of helping out, and the intrinsic reward this brings.

Important amongst these was reciprocity, which runs through sections 5.3., 5.4., 5.8., and 5.9., and explored through a number of theoretical lens here. Benefits given and benefits received were identified as a particular strength in these commentaries and is evidence of the two-way street operating in these contributions to community-university engagement as well as the learning experience.

A striking number of students also recognised a further strength of the ViC programme in that they see it as being integral to subjects being studied. This is in line with Knight & Yorke's (2004:38) 'understanding of subject matter' in the USEM model. Contextualising classroom learning means that blended learning of the applied and the theoretical are identified by students, enriching both.

Transformation of the self is identified as a significant experience used by some students to learn not only about the wider context of their contribution, but about themselves too, identifying 'efficacy beliefs' (Knight & Yorke, 2004:38) in that they have developed the confidence to make an impact on what they now want their graduate futures to look like, and an awareness (metacognition) of the learning gained.

The qualitative data which emerges from this micro level of analysis is at odds with the assumptions about volunteering offered by institutional responses examined in chapter four. A more complex picture emerges, and brings us to the debate about the purposes of education. Schwartz (2003:1) quotes Cleveland in claiming that:

> The outsiders want the students trained for their first job out of university, and the academics inside the system want the *student educated for 50 years of self-fulfilment. The trouble is* that the students want both.

The evidence drawn from student data validates the quotation above, and the pedagogic practice framework within ViC is shown to deliver it. The important issue to draw from this is that students do not acknowledge or understand 'employability' in the terms posed by the

dominant discourse. They present a more complex and seamless understanding that fits more with the discourse of employability espoused by Knight & Yorke (2004). As Knight & Yorke, (2003b:9) argue:

> We say that good subject matter understanding is compatable with employability policies, and that employability and good learning are highly compatible.

The neoliberal discourse which espouses and prioritises links between university education and 'graduateness' with the economy seem narrow compared to the enrichment that these students suggest is their experience of ViC. McArthur (2011:738) argues that 'the problem for higher education is not the trend towards it having an economic role, but rather the narrowness of the way in which that is conceptualised'. Thorson (2010:198/199) goes further by exploring the dangers of the neoliberal market economy in that it 'inspires people to become acquisitive and self-centred, and thus hampering their moral development'. The evidence from students in this study shows that their experience of ViC provides an opportunity to give back to the community in which they live and study, and it is not only about self-interest and their own gain.

Bearing in mind the uneven playing field that is the differentially structured labour market (Morley, 2001; Blasko et al, 2002) and the perceived status and hierarchy of HEIs (Harvey et al, 2002; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006a) students from HEIs such as Wrottesley can be seen to be disadvantaged in terms of individual employment success. The ViC

model of academic provision is seen to best prepare students operating in, and meeting challenges faced by, an unequal graduate labour market. In Holdsworth & Quinn's (2012:403) terms, these students are able to deconstruct their experiences and recognise the benefit of being able to to 'step outside of the protective space of the university, thus facilitating students' awareness of social inequalities'.

Students in this study are far from rejecting ideas about graduate employment – indeed they welcome it as a part of their undergraduate learning and becoming. They present their understanding of their experience as seamless, and so the conceptual models of altruistic and self-interest measures which permeate the literature on volunteering are unhelpful in understanding student motivations in the context of this study.

Such learning opportunities are embedded within the ViC model, where the practical experience of volunteering is explicitly supported by linking it to classroom learning. It can be seen how students identify with the benefits to themselves of this holistic model. This aligns with Brewis and Holdsworth's (2011:174) work, when they argue that:

> Students who are supported by their university to volunteer report better experiences of volunteering and reflect more positively upon the benefits that accrue through volunteering than student volunteers who are non-supported.

Students in this study, like those in the Matthews et al (2005) study, were able to network with professionals, service users and other

volunteers, in ways that are not possible in a classroom only setting. This gives rise to another dimension in the Communities of Practice that students encounter, that of being uniquely placed in a learning environment, supported by academic tutors within the academy and professionals within the organisation. This is a provision that is not accessible to student volunteers who undertake non-accredited volunteering.

It is demonstrated that combining community-centred volunteering activity with theoretical classroom learning enhances the student experience. It provides the context where both internally driven learning (about the self, about 'becoming') and the externally driven learning of the prevailing social, political and economic conditions that set the scene for learning activities. It is this richness that could be harnessed in order to develop a wider institutional understanding of the reciprocal benefits of ViC, together with enhancing the connections with communities and their organisations amongst whom the institution, both staff and students, live, work and study. This will be the focus of the final chapter, in order to draw out some of these complexities, and identify a range of academic and policy implications which emerge from the research findings.

Chapter Six

Summary and conclusions

6.1. Introduction

Research and data collection for this case study was undertaken during the academic years 2010/11, followed by a delay before the subsequent analysis was written up. This has had a significant effect on this thesis, since political events have overtaken the original timespan for the study. The discourse of 'employability' in its narrow sense is seen to have gained further traction in policy discourse. So the findings reported here, rather than being historical, have a refreshed resonance in terms of the issues under scrutiny, particularly given the contemporary policy impetus of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), Longitudinal Employment Outcomes (LEOs) and Learning Gain.

There is a paucity of research about the connections between the wider political, social and economic contexts which help to shape policy developments that drive student volunteering in universities. This research fills that gap exploring the impact of national government policy drivers on higher educational management and delivery of accredited volunteering modules, and the ways in which these are perceived and experienced by students themselves. Thus there are three levels of analysis examined in this case study of one higher

education institution. The first explores the macro level of national political policy directions concerning the voluntary sectors, volunteering and higher education. The second, the meso level, examined the ways in which institutions such as Wrottesley interpret wider policy directions for higher education delivery and practice. The third, at the micro level, looks at the experiences of students themselves, those undertaking the ViC programme. Bringing together all three levels of analysis helps to advance knowledge in the field, and through this substantiates the continued relevance of programmes such as ViC.

This chapter synthesises the main findings of the study, addressing the three key research questions. These explore the political and policy issues surrounding student volunteering in a higher education setting, and are analysed in the context of the delivery of an accredited programme (ViC). It provides the evidence of the discourse of 'employability' that has a major impact at policy and institutional levels in shaping perceptions of student volunteering, and thus ViC. Given this, it has been crucial to the study to examine and reveal the impact that this has on students' understandings of these activities during their studies. The chapter concludes by drawing out the implications for professional practice and contribution to knowledge.

6.2. Conclusions in response to research questions

I return to the three key research questions:

1. How has the national political policy context impacted on institutional responses to accredited volunteering in higher education?

2. What are the learning experiences of students undertaking volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?

3. What, if anything, do students value about the range of learning opportunities afforded by ViC?

I deal with each question in turn, exploring these in the light of the national political context, institutional policies, and empirical data collected.

6.2.1. Research Question 1: How has the political and national policy context impacted on institutional responses to accredited volunteering in higher education?

At the macro level of analysis, it can be seen in chapters one, two and four, that the political context through successive governments provided a raft of policy measures to encourage and support volunteering. This has been shown to be politically expedient in terms of the pressing social and economic concerns of the day (Sheard, 1995; Davis Smith, 2001; Kendal, 2005; Rochester et al, 2010). In particular, the New Labour years saw a flurry of government initiatives to provide support and funding to enhance the role of the voluntary sector in the delivery of services for social good. The Third Sector thus grew in size and importance politically, economically and socially (Kendall, 2000; Alcock, 2010; Milligan & Conradson, 2011). From the Office of the Third Sector also came the policy initiative to support increased volunteering activities by university students (HEFCE, 2001). As

explored in chapter one, HEACF funding (2002-2006) provided the impetus to include higher education students in this endeavour. It will be remembered that the ethos of this funding was at that time two-fold, embracing both employability and community engagement:

> gain new perspectives and enable them [students] to develop their employment skills while enhancing the quality of life in disadvantaged sections of the community (HEFCE, 2001:2)

The pedagogic rationale of the ViC programme then already operating in one academic school at Wrottesley lends itself well to these dual perspectives, in that it was intended to be a developmental learning tool both for students (applied and theoretical learning) and for engagement with communities across the region (civic responsibility; community engagement). The evidence drawn out in chapters one and four however, has shown that the dominant discourse of 'employability' has eclipsed this dual perspective (McArthur, 2011) and the narrow instrumentalism currently seen in these debates is now at odds with the ViC ethos. This definition of 'employability', the 'job-shop model', is also in conflict with ViC, based as it is on the definition of employability espoused by Knight & Yorke (2004:22) in which:

> we have no truck with 'education' or 'employability' thinking and we will keep arguing that good learning enhances career, citizenship and more besides.

Political demands in the form of student tuition fees, the DHLE graduate 'employability' survey (soon to be LEO), the TEF, Learning Gain, and the metrics required to assess institutional performance, all point

towards a pressure for HEIs to respond in terms of graduate employment rates.

National policy agendas implicated in neo-liberal policies have heavily influenced the course of direction for universities in recent years. As evidenced in chapter one, the neoliberal agenda has impacted upon higher education on a global scale (Levidow, 2002; Radice, 2013) in ways that have restructured higher education management, particularly in terms of tuition fees. This means more centralised control, business-like performance targets, and pushing the 'employability' discourse to the forefront has meant that universities need to:

> adopt commercial models of knowledge, skills, curriculum, finance, accounting, and management organisation… Moreover, higher education has become more synonymous with training for employability (Levidow, 2002:227).

Chapter one charts how government policy directives concerning graduate 'employability' influence HEIs to respond to these demands. It is also noted that increased tuition fees have shifted student expectations of their higher education experience. Taking on large debts increases pressures on students, and they expect a return on their investment. Thus both student expectations and government policy directives mean that HEIs are being squeezed from both directions in order to deliver to the demands of both. HEIs need to show value for money, and to respond to the Office for Students (OfS) to this effect as the new regulator of higher education from January 2018 (DoE, 2018).

This has the effect of reducing the autonomy of institutions such as Wrottesley, which inevitably need to emphasise the 'employability' discourse. With the arrival of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF, 2016) this pressure is increased because graduate 'employability' becomes one of the key metrics for its measurement. It is important to remember that these pressures are differentially experienced between Russell group and post-1992 institutions (Morley, 2001). Wrottesley, being one of the latter, shares this increased pressure.

In order to harness all student activities that can support the 'employability' agenda, we have seen in previous chapters how volunteering, including ViC, has been used to this end. The evidence explored in chapter four acknowledges these pressures but also reveals a lack of understanding by institutional senior management, of the distinctions between ViC, extra-curricular volunteering, workplace learning and employability in its widest sense.

The political and national policy context for graduate 'employability' (the narrow 'job-shop' model of the term) in turn provided the context for the institutional policy development explored in chapter four. The institutional imperative to grow opportunities for student 'employability' created tensions between the Students Union and the ViC programme. This reveals the perceived competition for students and resources, and hence the unintended consequences of the policies as enacted within the institution (Evans, 2003). These opportunities included volunteering in all its forms, and sees the conflation of accredited volunteering with

work experience. Hence the link between volunteering and 'employability' is given further prominence.

Chapter four shows that the comments from senior management are for the most part concerned with a narrow definition of 'employability', of which the following two comments are pertinent:

> *We need to make sure that those…our students are the students that employers look for, that they have the graduate attributes…because, well, they deserve it (U4).*
>
> *Hopefully that [volunteering] helps them to learn some of the core employability skills that employers are always telling us students are no good at (U2).*

This concern replicates policy directives from HEFCE and the government view of the dominant value of degree level education, in line with current neo-liberal ideologies prevailing across the political spectrum.

As shown in chapter one the Coalition government, with its austerity agenda, meant reduced funding to both the public and voluntary sectors. The result was that the political landscape for volunteering changed again. The shrinking of the public purse in the form of reducing contributions to public and voluntary sector organisations meant that fewer volunteering opportunities were available for students. Competition emerged for volunteering places for those on the Workfare programme being assigned to voluntary organisations. The contradictions these policy directions contain have resulted in reduced

opportunities being available for student volunteers, and further conflate the notions of volunteering and work experience at a national level.

In answering the first research question then, it is clear that economic and political influences have had an important impact on issues of 'employability' in higher education in recent decades. It has been shown that this has informed and influenced the institutional policy agenda in one post-1992 HEI, and that accredited volunteering has been subsumed within this. Holdsworth & Quinn (2012:390) suggest that this 'reflects the marginalised status of student volunteering and community engagement'.

Having established the political influences upon volunteering, student volunteering and 'employability' at the macro and meso levels of examination, I now move on to the second research question.

6.2.2. Research Question 2: What are the learning experiences of students undertaking volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?

It has been shown earlier that there are different models of students volunteering that operate in HEIs. The crucial difference between programmes is whether the activity is accredited as part of the undergraduate curriculum, or is an extra-curricular activity run usually by the Careers Department or the Students Union. The ViC programme was devised to provide a more expansive vision of the benefits of

volunteering and learning than the job-shop model of 'employability' envisages.

In this study the micro level of analysis was carried out via a student survey conducted with students undertaking ViC across three cohorts of students. Students across all three cohorts surveyed revealed a more nuanced understanding of the employability agenda, and of the experience that ViC afforded for their academic learning and their political and personal development. Their evidence shows that the classroom learning is important to this process because they are able to theorise their experience with their tutors and peers, and thus peer learning takes place. This develops a scaffolding of learning which supports the integration of the academic, the experiential and the growth element of their learning activities. This is in line with what Harvey et al (2002) describes as a holistic learning experience whereby different aspects of employability are embedded within the curriculum. Knight & Yorke (2004:196) see strategies such as this as blending the twin aspects of learning, theoretical and experiential, rather than 'to see these as being substantially oppositional'. Thus education and employability are presented as seamless.

The opportunity for students to explore, unpack and examine the role of not-for-profit sector organisations within the current political, economic and social contexts is a key feature of the ViC programme. At the same time it is shown to relate to the wider academic subjects being studied by students on their degree programmes. Students

connect their practical experiences to these wider theoretical concerns thus paving the way to developing academic links to the 'real-world'. As (76046) put it, students are:

> *Able to experience what we study in class, put ideas theories and policies into context. This is very important.*

The structured learning processes that occur alongside the time spent volunteering means that these connections gradually reinforce one another. Thus the combination of practice and theory are an essential feature of ViC for the students in this study. As the following comment makes clear, it is not just the learning on the ViC module that is enriched, but connections are made throughout the whole course:

> *The module [ViC] helped put into context deep rooted meaning of what I have studied on my course. (76046)*

Developing understanding of politics and policy implications was another form of the learning experience revealed by the student survey. Becoming aware of the importance of current political and economic issues was an eye-opener for (76009), politics being something that *'I never was keen on before'.* Similarly, for (76081), who declared that *'it allowed me to see the practical implications that a policy can have on an individual'.* Thus the 'hands-on', the 'real-world' experiences of ViC are brought back into the classroom setting in order to explore wider connections.

This expanded understanding of the learning offered by ViC has the potential to widen Communities of Practice experienced by students in the way that Engestrom (2007) envisages. ViC can offer a learning experience that takes in theory classroom based learning, whilst connecting to the learning gained within networks and collectives. This can support the student 'to see themselves in terms of a new identity, that is, to see themselves as the kind of a person who can learn, use, and value the new semiotic domain' (Engestrom, 2007:36). As well as the students Community of Practice in the higher education setting, they are exposed to an organisational setting in which they need to become familiar with working practices, and volunteer alongside professionals, other volunteers and service users. This *'real world idea of what certain organisations and individuals experience'* (76017) provides an insight into another world in which *'an active role in the improvement and involvement of a local community'* (76046) becomes possible. Experiences of these external Communities of Practice are then brought back into the classroom, shared and explored in terms of their meanings for students, and yet another Community of Practice emerges – that of shared insights between students and tutors to help make sense not only of their own volunteering experience, but that of other students undertaking their own challenges. Lave & Wenger (1991:53) argue that it is social participation that offers the opportunity to learn from practitioners:

> To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of

> identities…identity, knowing and social membership entail one another.

There is a great deal of trust, bonding and networking (all of which are dimensions of social capital) generated through ViC. Community organisations taking part in the programme offer an experience to students on the understanding that this relationship will be of mutual benefit. Social capital is thus possible between the institution, the organisation and students, and becomes a site of learning which gives an *'understanding of the volunteering community'* (76089). The enhancement of social capital not only resides in the community organisation, but moves into the university, with classroom support offering the opportunity for students to recognise their own contribution to social capital.

The learning experiences thus revealed by ViC students capture wide ranging responses that combine theoretical learning with that of practical and applied activities which benefit communities and enable students to critically reflect, make sense of and articulate the changes in themselves. This process of transformation of the self is akin to the work of Mezirow (1990); Colley et al (2007); Holdsworth & Quinn (2012) and is part of the process of expansive learning identified by Engestrom (2007). Looked at against the USEM model (Knight & Yorke, 2004:38), it can be seen that these respond particularly strongly to those of 'understanding of subject matter' and 'efficacy beliefs'. Thus it can be seen that the ViC programme demonstrates rigour in terms of

the employability model espoused by Knight & Yorke (2004) and goes much further than the dominant discourse of 'employability'.

6.2.3. Research Question 3: What, if anything, do students value about the range of learning opportunities afforded by ViC?

A strong message in student responses is the value placed on the reciprocal nature of experiential learning (just under half of all respondents). Students across all cohorts and all ethnic groups recognised the value of practical, applied learning opportunities in a community setting and then being supported to process these in the classroom with their peers and tutors. This means that the learning and understanding comes not only from their own practical volunteering activity but those of their peers, who may have had different activities, outcomes, and challenges to their own. This shared classroom learning is supported by academic tutors who facilitate the process. Students are thus enabled to place these experiences within a wider social/political/economic framework. These connections are intrinsic to the ViC pedagogic practice at Wrottesley. The stated valued connections by students were a deeper understanding of the not-for-profit sectors, an awareness of the political policy directions for these sectors, and the difference they made to their own undergraduate studies. For example, the comment from (76051) that '*I was able to understand better what I studied in my modules by experiencing life experiences faced by different people'.* Or that of (75913), who stated that '*[volunteering] helped me to write my essays with hands-on*

experience'. The analysis in chapter five shows students identifying the two-way benefits, and these are espoused as particular advantages of the programme. These include supporting the community (*'it feels rewarding to give something back to the community' 76057)* whilst helping themselves to a broader experience that would not only enhance CVs *('improve my CV…helping those in need' 76051)* but also transform thinking about their contribution *('it has given me more motivation to help others in need' (76089).* Reciprocity therefore, is an important element of this learning experience, and valued accordingly. This not only sits well with Rochester et al's (2010) contention that altruism and self-interest can sit side by side in volunteer motivations and expectations, but would seem to be intrinsically intertwined in students experiences – so much so that students perceive them to be seamless. This connection to community, to organisations, and to other individuals, contributes to social capital which was explored in more detail in chapter five.

Undertaking the ViC programme was cited by 23 students (out of 60) as being valuable to help with future graduate prospects. Expectations of graduate employment are hardly surprising given the high financial investment these students and their families are making towards their studies. It is significant that most of those who did so came from cohort 1 (in their first year), those who had studied ViC shortly before the survey was conducted. It is likely that the power of the dominant discourse of 'employability' plays a part in this, both before and after

their arrival at university. The desire for a rewarding graduate career is legitimate and perfectly understandable, and students studying at Wrottesley are as entitled as any others to aspire to this.

Self-interest is not the only – or the most significant – aspects of ViC that is being valued. Given the background of the majority of students at Wrottesley with high indices of multiple deprivation (predominantly working class, drawn often from the local region) it has to be remembered that, as Mallman (2017) argues in a psychosocial analysis of working-class students, they arrive feeling inferior and disadvantaged in the higher education milieu. Given the origins, ethos and widening participation agenda of Wrottesley therefore, this was one of the reasons taken into account when first developing and accrediting ViC (Anderson & Green, 2006) as just one of the tasks in attempting to level the playing field. As Mallman (2017:237) points out, 'middle class entitlement affords a sense of legitimacy' whilst '[working class students] view their status as students as a privilege, not an entitlement' (Mallman, 2017:236).

An interesting discussion emerges on the theme of agency, as explored in chapter five. 'Intrinsic agency' identifies the value in learning about themselves and the way they respond to the challenges and achievements. Students also reflect upon the impact this has had on them. '*I have decided that I need to be challenged'* is the brave comment from 74046, whereas 76089 claims that it has *'allowed me to [sic] patient and that truly is a virtue'.* The second, that of 'external

agency' is where the experience of undertaking ViC has resulted in learning about the wider social, economic and political contexts in which their volunteering takes place. *'I now think that volunteering is an important part of our society'* (76081) and *'I have realised how a lot of people struggle with what most of us take for granted'* (75921) are two examples of the latter, and demonstrate the ways in which ViC students develop their understandings of themselves, communities and the wider society in which they live and study.

Some students recognised the value of both sorts of agency, such as (76017), who showed that *'volunteering gave me an opportunity to look on the other side of life, and helped me see that giving help for 10 hours a week unpaid actually benefitted myself'.* Student responses to both show how these learning experiences have changed them and their values. Through classroom interaction and learning, and the assessment strategies built into the curriculum, students are able to articulate and demonstrate these learning experiences, some of which are clearly transformational. This level of understanding of the ViC programme in terms of the ways in which students develop an understanding about themselves, is evidence of a rejection of the narrow definition of 'employability' – that is, as a set of technical skills and competences. It is evidence of their own agency in that they embrace so much more than the 'job-shop' model of 'employability'. They address the ways in which the experience broadened out their sense of themselves and who they wanted to be, in the ways that

Colley et al (2007:474) describe as ‘identity transformation’, that of being and becoming a graduate in the fullest sense of the word.

Moving beyond the concept of agency there is an important element revealed that suggests a transformative impact on their future selves as a result of their accredited volunteering and associated learning. Typical of such students are (75915) and (75916) who declared that a change had occurred through experiencing ViC. It has changed their awareness and understanding, not only about the world but about what they understood about themselves. They now want different things for their future selves – ‘my outlook on life has changed’ and ‘I now know I would like to work with women’ indicates what Matthews et al (2005) call ‘value change’. From realising that ViC had helped (76012) to *‘think outside the ‘me, myself, and I’ box’* to a recognition for (76009) that *‘I now look at life differently’* we begin to see evidence of the value students hold of the changes they are experiencing in themselves – moving another (76032) to declare that *‘it inspired me to want to help change and make a good contribution’.* This range of comments point towards the process of ‘becoming’ in the way that is proposed by Colley at al (2007) and Barnett (2009). So too Holdsworth & Quinn (2012:403) point out that the opportunity to ‘step outside of the protective space of the university, thus facilitating students’ awareness of social inequalities’ can open up new ways of knowing. Not only about the organisations and issues they face while volunteering, but also about how they begin to see themselves and their future lives. For

me, as for Holdsworth & Quinn (2012:403) 'ultimately this is its most significant and pervasive function' in that the ViC programme provides for, and supports, this expansive learning. As Barnett (2009:429) puts it:

> *We may take a curriculum in higher education to be a pedagogic vehicle for effecting changes in human beings through particular kinds of encounter with knowledge.*

It is important to consider the contrast between this set of evidence and those of the institutional responses. Students are clearly rejecting the 'job-shop' model of graduate employment, and embracing the wider sense of being and becoming as in the Knight & Yorke's (2004) wider sense of employability.

As Barnett (2009:435) suggests, 'there is this extraordinary and intimate relationship between knowing and becoming'. The ViC programme supports this transformational relationship in the process of coming to know about themselves and of becoming employable in the holistic sense of the term. Barnett (2009:437) poses the question:

> What kinds of curricular and what kinds of pedagogies are likely to elicit the formation of the kinds of (epistemologically linked) dispositions and qualities – the epistemic virtues…?

I contend that the ViC programme has many of the qualities that lend themselves to curricular provision since the experience it offers resounds meaningfully for students. Although not part of this study,

there is much anecdotal evidence from students during my many teaching years, that they actively challenge the notion that volunteering is principally about enhancing employment. They recognise that these qualities have a 'performative value' (Barnett, 2004:258/259) and have meaning for their future selves beyond this. These profound value changes are transformative in as much as they will help to shape their whole futures, and not just in narrow graduate employment terms. Students are valuing wider concerns that are part of 'identity transformation' (Colley et al, 2003:474) that go further than the narrow concept of 'employability' articulated by university management. Students in this study lay claim to being challenged and changed as a result of participating in ViC, something that Barnett (2009:435) describes as:

> A deep and personal encounter with knowledge calls for and helps to nourish ethically worthwhile forms of human being…Indeed, we might even say that they became a new self.

There is a wealth of evidence here to suggest that this evidence corresponds to the 'skilful practices'; 'efficacy beliefs', and 'metacognition' within Knight & Yorke's (2004:38) USEM model.

To respond to this research question, students have a much richer, more nuanced understanding of the values they attach to their learning experiences through ViC, than those in senior managements positions. Indeed, the evidence presented in this thesis would suggest that the dual conceptual models hitherto discussed, that of altruism and self-

interest, do not hold up. Rather it is suggested that these students do not see them as separate entities, but that they 'dance' with one another across the three years of undergraduate study. The opportunity to experience more than one ViC module across their undergraduate careers points towards a development of learning, experiencing, understanding, evolving and reflecting. This suggests that the holistic learning processes developed in the ViC programme offers a seamless approach to academic, critical pedagogy and the opportunity to develop employability in the broader sense espoused by Knight & Yorke (2004).

6.3. Contribution to knowledge

This thesis has demonstrated that political and government policy decisions, including funding, impact heavily on the ways in which HEIs respond to the demands thus made upon them. What is shown is how volunteering is viewed by institutional management in one university and how these views are shaped by the external policy context and directives from funding bodies. The implementation of the 'employability' agenda, into which the ViC programme has been subsumed, is seen to serve the demands of the neoliberal political discourse.

There is a disconnect between this evidence however, and that from students who experience the ViC programme. Students on courses within the Social Sciences have a more nuanced and wider appreciation of the value of accredited volunteering to the development of their identities as critical citizens as well as their graduate employment

prospects. The definition of employability proposed by Yorke & Knight (2007:158) is that 'of a graduate's *suitability* for appropriate employment. It is quite different from actually *getting* an appropriate job'. This carries a different meaning of employability than the focus on students being trained for jobs following graduation, as in policy emphases described in chapter four.

This research reveals the narrowness of the 'employability' agenda (Harvey et al, 2002; Knight & Yorke, 2004). Higher education should be about more than 'training for employability' (Levidow, 2002:227). It is an opportunity to encounter 'the extraordinary and intimate relationship between knowing and becoming' (Barnett, 2009:435). It is demonstrated here that the ViC programme, as developed and planned all those years ago, still holds up in terms of its pedagogic aims as evidenced by student testimonies. Student responses demonstrate an understanding of their experience as being seamless in the aims of ViC, and of their own expectations in that education and employability are inextricably intertwined.

The existing body of knowledge explored in chapter two offers a range of motivations and benefits for volunteering in general and within a university setting. My contribution to knowledge goes further in that meanings within student data goes deeper than the broader surveys of student volunteering have hitherto been able to do. The empirical data revealed here focuses on accredited student volunteering and is distinct from other surveys in which different models of volunteering are drawn

on without distinguishing between them (Brewis, et al, 2010). This study also contrasts from large scale surveys that draw on a number of institutions and countries in order to survey the student volunteering landscape, and student motivations for volunteering at a superficial level (Hustinx et al, 2005; Smith et al, 2010; Gronlund et al, 2011).

My research enables deeper understanding of the ViC model of student volunteering and its value to students, communities and the institution. It also reveals a significant contrast between institutional policy, and the learners who opt for ViC as part of their higher education studies and those academic practitioners who advocate it.

A further contribution to knowledge is made through the use of the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis to inform the connections between each level of policy, institution and service delivery. This has not been done previously in relation to researching volunteering in higher education. The analysis demonstrates the relationships between all three, and the complex processes that are interwoven between all three levels of interaction.

The national policy directions delivered by succeeding governments are seen to pursue particular priorities at the macro level and this impacts upon the ways in which HEIs respond. Thus the narrow definition of 'employability', the job-shop model, has gained traction at Wrottesley University as elsewhere. What is interesting is that evidence from students themselves shows that they embrace a broader sense of

employability which allies to the model that Knight & Yorke (2004) espouses.

My contribution therefore, is the recognition of ViC as a broader, seamless approach to higher education learning, which offers the opportunity of expansive learning (Engestrom, 2007). As McArthur (2011:745) argues, 'by allowing scope for our development as people, unassociated with exchange values, we also allow the scope for a different approach to work within our broader lives'.

6.4. Implications for practice

The development of the accredited ViC programme in the second half of the 1980s was innovative at the time, and continues to be so, combining academic study, volunteering and social action. Evidence from students participating in this case study validates the original pedagogic rationale behind the provision. The theoretical USEM model developed by Knight & Yorke (2004) has been applied in the academic practice of the ViC programme. The evidence confirms that the theory works well in practice. Engestrom's (2007) idea of expansive learning sits well within the pedagogic rationale of ViC provision, as does McArthur's (2011:744) notion of 'the importance of bringing together economic and social factors' in higher education delivery.

It would strengthen the integrated economic, experiential, social and theoretical learning factors if programmes such as ViC are recognised more broadly in terms of the benefits of higher education and the ways

in which it can contribute to students' development in a number of ways, only one of these being vocationally. Instead of the ViC programme continuing to be seen at Wrottesley as one of the tools to aid the 'employability' agenda, it could be recognised as integral within a strategy to encompass a seamless approach to the aims of accomplishing higher education learning and graduate employment. This would entail tutors and course leaders making senior management aware of the explicit benefits of accredited programmes such as ViC.

The latest policy agendas now facing HEIs – institutional scrutiny via the OfS, the TEF, LEOs and Learning Gain, mean that 'employability' will remain a high priority for the considerable future. The strengths of the ViC programme is that it combines this aim with study of a theoretical as well as an applied learning experience, and so can be used effectively to deliver all aspects of higher education.

The predominance of working class and first generation students at Wrottesley means that a significant proportion of students are disadvantaged in terms of a lack of social capital, confidence, and their ability to achieve graduate employment in an uneven labour market (Leathwood & O'Connell, 2003; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006a; Mallman, 2017). The pedagogy of the ViC programme is one tool in overcoming at least some aspects of these, as it can enable students to realise their potential and gives them practical experience and understanding of the economic inequalities within prevailing social, political and economic conditions. The transformational aspects of ViC are evidenced by

students themselves and Holdsworth & Quinn (2012:394) suggest that 'through engagement with others, students may reflect on their experiences in a more deconstructive way'. The evidence from this study can therefore be used to inform practice at Wrottesley, as well as further afield through journal articles and conference contributions. While retired from teaching, I continue my association with the university as an Honorary Research Fellow.

6.5. Suggestions for further research

This research has shown that the political, economic and educational context within which volunteering takes place has an important impact on the learning experience for the higher education student. Government policy shapes the provision within higher education providers, and as such does influence policy decisions at institutional level, which in turn impacts upon the students who undertake the ViC programme. The priority of student graduate 'employability' is ever growing in importance for government and HEIs, and so will continue to hold sway for senior university management. It behoves us then to examine the ways in which the benefits of ViC can be harnessed to even greater effect. Following on from this research, it would be helpful to further focus on the following:

A further study, using the ViC programme to examine the efficacy of the pedagogic model, could be of immense value to test the benefits in relation to policy areas such as the TEF and Learning Gain. It would

useful to include graduates in this follow-up work, in order to see whether ViC does contribute to success in graduate employment.

Research undertaken which includes yet another set of stakeholders – those of community and voluntary sector organisations who benefit from and take on student volunteers and support their learning experiences. Without these partners in the enterprise, the ViC programme would not exist. Their value cannot be underestimated. Strengthening these connections, and understanding the shared experience of providing students with volunteering opportunities, can only enhance the shared benefits, social capital and further partnership working.

Further research could explore the significance of prior volunteering before starting university study. This could be an indicator of career volunteering that can be pursued to develop strategies for recruitment and enhance widening participation.

The journey undertaken for this thesis has been long and challenging, requiring stamina and determination. It has also been stimulating and rewarding, with insights into political ideologies that lay behind volunteering generally and student volunteering in particular. The institutional policy dimensions have been intriguing and revealing, and it would seem to be an appropriate moment in terms of curriculum development to look at the ways in which the value of the ViC

programme can be strengthened and recognised more widely across the institution, and indeed beyond.

6.6. Critical Reflective Analysis

Finally, it is useful to draw attention to some critical insights about the research findings and research process. Firstly, this research has revealed important issues regarding the use of the concepts of altruism and self-interest in relation to motivations for volunteering. While much of the literature examined in chapter two treats these as separate, dichotomous concepts, the student data in my research exposes a much more blurred and nuanced understanding of the concepts. It would be more helpful then, (and I suggest, more honest) to understand these concepts not as binary opposites, but that they can and do merge seamlessly. As Smith (1998) argues, genuine altruism rarely exists as a motivation in and of itself. Experiencing community engagement means that, in the words of one student (76051), enables them to *"improve my CV, gain work experience, also utilise my time wisely, helping those in need in the community".* Much of the student data is found to similarly embrace a continuous reciprocity, in that both giving and receiving through the volunteering activity becomes manifest. The value to both benefactor and recipients of the volunteering is seamlessly recognised. Students have revealed a commitment to community through their contribution ("*I like giving back*" (76022), "*it has given me more motivation to help others*" (76089). This is an indication of an awareness of, and a desire to affect,

the plight of others in the manner that Blum (1980) suggests is the result of *wanting* to do good, rather than because of a sense of duty to perform it. It is this aspect that introduces a more sophisticated understanding of reciprocity and a deeper appreciation of altruism, and would imply that a clearer definition of the term altruism can and should embrace reciprocity without the notion of the volunteer being selfless in providing their help. Here students recognise that they also benefit even as they are doing good, and not performing this good out of duty. As (76017) makes clear, volunteering, '*helped me see that giving help for 10 hours a week unpaid actually benefitted myself'.* This kind of altruism is not 'selfless' in the sense implied in the dichotomy between altruism and self-interest. I also suggest that this desire to do good is behind the motivations of those 'committed' student volunteers and those who, once exposed to volunteering, become 'converted' volunteers.

The domains of learning explored and exposed in the student data here have shown the ways in which ViC can contribute to holistic aspects of higher education learning. These include the concepts of experiential learning, theoretical, transformative and expansive learning. As with Millican and Bourner (2014:203) my research found that a significant number of undergraduates who selected accredited volunteering as part of their studies, did so because '*it's important to get a sense of the community outside of the university'*. Students in Millican and Bourner's (2014:203) study indicate that an understanding of what '*community*

engagement is, or how it might be relevant to them, develops during the process of being engaged with it'. This tallies with the work of Matthews et al (2005) who found that community engagement learning develops over time, and is particularly relevant where the three year undergraduate curriculum allows opportunities throughout. It will be noted that the ViC model at Wrottesley was purposely developed in this way to enable such accumulation of learning. There is particular evidence in this thesis that those who were final year students when surveyed, demonstrated a clear understanding of the ways in which this learning had impacted upon them. This includes providing insights through applied learning as well as theoretical learning; developing a broader understanding of the social, political and economic contexts or organisations; of social capital; and learning about themselves in significant ways. Key to this is the evidence of transformation that students identify, changing personal values, and changing the sense of 'self' that will have an impact on their future lives as graduates. All of these domains of learning, explored in more detail in chapter five, demonstrate that the reduction model of 'employability' (that is, the dominant discourse of graduate students obtaining employment) carries far less significance within the ViC model of student volunteering.

The original research design included surveys with three cohorts of students who undertook ViC modules followed by semi-structured interviews with a proportion of these students. Semi-structured interviews with senior institutional management and Student Union

personnel and a sample of not-for-profit organisations with whom ViC students undertake volunteering activities were also planned. However, interviews with organisational personnel were eliminated from the research design at an early stage since it was noted by supervisors that to include these would make the research too extensive for a project of this size, and within the time limit to complete under award regulations. The student interviews were eliminated at a later stage because of the richness of the data provided by the student survey, and the delay, due to ill-health, in returning to the detailed analysis of data. The latter demonstrates the way in which research is a social process and is impacted by everyday circumstances, and circumscribes and potentially limits some aspects of the findings.

In reflecting on the research process, the value of the research methods chosen lies in the subsequent data gathered. The richness of the student data via the survey justifies the detailed survey questions that were contained therein. The decision to abandon follow up interviews with students did limit areas of analysis which, with hindsight, could have been developed further. One of the opportunities missed in the decision not to conduct interviews with students, meant that some issues, such as 'committed' volunteers, 'career' volunteers and 'converted' volunteers were not pursued. Given that the data presented a significant ratio of students who already volunteered before entering university, this was an opportunity missed. It would seem likely that those students already familiar with volunteering would have

a different experience to those newly introduced to the activity. It would have been useful to have been able to compare and contrast these different experiences and expectations in order to investigate how the ViC programme can accommodate all aspects more effectively.

An initial method considered for collecting data from institutional personnel was also via a survey. However, a decision was made to undertake semi-structured interviews instead, given the small number of respondents selected to participate. This method proved to be fruitful inasmuch that the results were very revealing, as explored in chapter four. It is recognised that it is possible the reflective reports of students submitted as part of assessment could provide rich data on the practical, experiential, developmental and theoretical learning gained on the ViC programme. These were not included in the original research design, and to include them at a later stage would have meant reapplying to the Ethics committee for approval, and gaining consent from students retrospectively. Given the numbers in each cohort this would have been a time consuming process and would have delayed the research process. In addition, level 6 students had already graduated and it would have been difficult to contact them to obtain consent. It is intended however, that that student reports will form the basis of future research in collaboration with colleagues who now run the ViC modules. The research will seek to understand the ways in which accredited volunteering contributes to, and realises the 'learning gain' of students.

Finally, in respect of the future operation and delivery of the ViC programme there are three developments that can be considered. The first of these is probably the most difficult to achieve but is necessary to consider. One of the key aspects arising from this research for me as a practitioner is the realisation that if ViC is to be understood by university management in an holistic way rather than be reduced to just another 'employability' initiative, then it needs to be seen to be able to be useful to the institution in achieving these policy agendas. The Learning Gain agenda is one such way ViC may be able to break from the stranglehold of a reductive discourse of 'employability' by demonstrating the way the model delivers an holistic learning experience which, as demonstrated in this research, enables students to 'become' graduates in the fullest sense of the word, transforming the way that their learning is experienced and understood, making a difference to their future graduate lives.

A further desirable development is 'in-reach' from voluntary sector organisations, that is, talks given by visiting representatives of organisations which would introduce students to a wider range of issues than they may already be aware of. This could include discussions of the current political and economic contexts in which such organisations operate, and the challenges and rewards, as well as the social capital that volunteers bring to their work. Engaging with international organisations too, would add a further dimension to the global context of community engagement, whether this is done by means of

volunteering at a local branch or going overseas to carry out the activity. This would enable engagement with an international community of practice which opens up opportunities for students to make connections with global aspects of issues which can only enhance global awareness, personal development and skills in operating in culturally diverse contexts. This is being explored with the next generation of academic practitioners who are taking forward the model of practice I have developed.

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Appendix (i) Original interview schedule

Doctoral study: Student Volunteering in the Higher Education curriculum: Policy, practice, principles and partnership

Interview schedule for senior management

A. Your role

1. Confirmation of role and responsibilities

2. How long at the university?

B. UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

3. I am interested in the different ways in which this university engages with local communities. Can you take me through this?

4. Are there centralised policies which articulate and support what we do?

5. Do you think that the university could or should do more?

PROMPTS:
- To what extent do you consider the University of Wolverhampton pursues these goals?

- To what extent do you consider the university achieves these goals?

- Do you think that national policy shifts [say over the last decade?] have helped or hindered university-community engagement?

6. Can you identify the benefits that might accrue?

C. COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING

7. Can you say something about CBL provision here at Wolverhampton?

8. Would you say that this (CBL as a site of student learning) is supported and encouraged?

9. Current economic concerns – (e.g. the Comprehensive Spending Review and the Browne review of higher education) do you see these as a threat or opportunity for CBL?

D. VOLUNTEERING IN THE CURRICULUM

10. Can you comment on volunteering at Wolverhampton?

11. Can you say something about your experience of the provision of volunteering in the curriculum (ViC)?

12. What do you see as the main drivers for ViC at Wolverhampton?

13. What do you consider are the benefits (to all the key stakeholders – the university, students, and external organisations) of the creating opportunities for using communities as learning spaces for students?

14. Do you have any thoughts on the current wider political context?

.

PROMPTS:

-The 'Big Society' policy of the Coalition government suggests that greater responsibility for civil society should be taken up by social action projects in the community – *'a society where people come together to solve problems and improve life for themselves and their communities'* 1.

Do you think that this represents an opportunity for the university to work more effectively with voluntary and community groups? (e.g. in-reach and out-reach?)

If yes, how?
If no, why not?

In the current economic context, it is argued (2) that there will be increased demand for information, advice and support from the voluntary sector. To what extent do you think that our students can contribute effectively to this as part of their accredited learning experience?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS THAT GET TO THE DETAIL:

Is that a widely held view (within senior university management)?

Do you think that is the view in other universities?

Do you think the same constraints/ enablers operate in other universities?

FINAL SWEEP QUESTION:

Is there anything that our discussion hasn't covered that you would like to add about this, or about the research project?

Conservative Party Manifesto, 2010 General Election
Barnard, H. *'Big Society, Cuts & Consequences: A Thinkpiece'*. Paper from the Centre for Charity Effectiveness, Cass Business School, City University London

Pat Green
December 2010

Appendix (ii) Revised interview schedule

Doctoral study: Student Volunteering in the Higher Education curriculum: Policy, practice, principles and partnership

Interview schedule for senior management and Student Union personnel

1. Confirmation of role

2. Can you tell me how you see student volunteering at this university?

Prompts for me:
- what do you see as the main drivers?
- what about accredited volunteering? (as part of CBL)

3. How do you see this provision intersecting with, and adding value to, key strategic purposes of the institution?

Prompts for me:
e.g. learning and teaching
research
recruitment
retention
progression
public engagement
knowledge transfer

4. To what extent do you see volunteering (and ViC) as core to the business of the university?

5. Can you tell me what you know about the current volunteering management here?

Prompts for me:
e.g. adequate levels of support?
Resources?
Do we need more professionalised volunteer management?
National research suggests that senior university staff express strong commitment to volunteering, the services (such as AV) that support this provision are hampered by lack of secure funding and a relatively low profile. Can you comment on this in terms of this university?

POSSIBLE FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS to prompt more detail:

is that a widely held view (within senior management)?

do you think that is the view in other universities?

Do you think the same constraints/enablers operate in other universities?

Do you have any thoughts on the current wider political context?

E.g. CSR; 'Big Society'; Browne review

6. Is there anything that our discussion hasn't covered that you would like to add?

Pat Green
February 2011

Student Survey

This survey is being carried out in order to learn more about the student volunteering experience within the first year of undergraduate study. I have two key purposes in undertaking this research. I am interested in understanding student motivations and experiences of taking the Volunteering in the Community module, so that we can develop provision in the school for future students. The second is that it forms part of my doctoral study. This survey is the first phase of my study, and responding to the following questionnaire should take less than 15 minutes.

Please enter your name and e-mail address at the end of the survey, and these will be entered in a draw to win a £75.00 Amazon voucher.

Completing and returning the questionnaire will confirm your agreement to take part in this study. All responses will be analysed and used without identifying individuals, and this anonymity will be respected in the writing up. Your contact details will be kept separately from your answers to the other questions.

Thank you.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact me on the email address below.
Pat Green, School of Law, Social Sciences and Communications
T: [tel. no. redacted] email: [redacted]

Did you do any volunteering before coming to university?

Yes
No

Have you continued with this whilst at university?

Yes
No

Did you use this volunteering for the Volunteering in the Community module?

Yes
No

Did you continue with your volunteering when the module finished?

Yes
No

Are you a member of any voluntary groups or organisations at the moment?

Yes
No
Please state here all your reasons for choosing to take the Volunteering in the Community module.

Please outline the nature of the volunteering activity you undertook for this module:

Did this module contribute to your learning in the subject(s) studied at university?

Yes
No

If yes, can you give some examples?

How did this form of learning compare to more conventional class-based learning?
Can you give some examples?

10. Please indicate how far you think each of the following have increased, decreased or stayed the same as a result of studying Volunteering in the Community.

My readiness for paid employment
The skills I have that potential employers will value
Clarity about what I want to do as a career
My chance of gaining employment in my chosen field
Contacts/networks that will be useful when looking for employment

Increased greatly Increased Stayed the same Decreased Decreased greatly

11. Can you say whether you think each of the following have increased, decreased or stayed the same

My communication skills
My listening skills
My ability to work as part of a team
My ability to make decisions
My problem-solving skills
My ability to lead or encourage others
My organisational skills
My confidence in my own abilities
My willingness to try new things
My self-discipline
My time management
My motivation
My self-awareness
My knowledge of my degree subject(s)

Increased greatly Increased Stayed the same Decreased Decreased greatly

12. Would you say that volunteering has changed your outlook or attitudes on life?
Yes
No

Please give reasons for your answer

13. Has volunteering made you any more likely to get involved with community groups in the future?

Yes
No

Please give reasons for your answer

14. If you are continuing to volunteer in any capacity, is it with the same organisation that you volunteered with for the module?

Yes
No
Not applicable

Please provide an explanation for your decision.

15. If you are not currently volunteering, what are the main reasons that you stopped? Please tick all that apply.

I completed the university module
I felt my efforts weren't always appreciated
I found myself out of pocket
I didn't get asked to do the things I'd like to
I felt the organisation was badly organised
I'd achieved the award or certificate I set out to
Not enough time – because of pressures of study
Not enough time – because of involvement with other clubs, sports or societies
Not enough time – because of paid work
Not enough time – because of family commitments
I lost interest
I felt that I'd done enough already

Other – please specify

16. What are your career aspirations once you graduate?

17. Do you think that your volunteering learning experience has influenced your choice of future career?

Yes
No

18. If yes, can you say how? If no, can you say why not?

19. Now, just a few questions about you. Are you

Male
Female

20. Please indicate your age group:

18-25 26-36 36-45 over 45

21. Do you have any domestic responsibilities - e.g. childcare, or caring for elderly or infirm family members?

Yes
No

If yes, please state what:

22. Do you consider yourself to have some form of disability?

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

23. Which of the following most accurately describes your FATHER'S or guardian's current economic status?

In paid employment
Unemployed and looking for work
Not in paid employment and not looking for work (e.g. providing a caring role at home)
Not in paid employment due to ill heath
Retirement from paid employment
Student
Not applicable/Don't know
Other (please specify

24. What is his current or most recent job? Please write your answer below:

25. Which of the following most accurately describes your MOTHER'S or guardian's current economic status?

In paid employment
Unemployed and looking for work
Not in paid employment and not looking for work (e.g. providing a caring role at home)
Not in paid employment due to ill heath
Retirement from paid employment
Student
Not applicable/Don't know
Other (please specify

26. What is her current or most recent job? Please write your answer below:

27. Which members of your family have attended university? Please tick all that apply.

Mother
Father
Brother/s and sister/s
Grandmother

Grandfather
None / Don't Know

28. Which of these best describes your sexual orientation? Please note this question is included for monitoring purposes only.

Bisexual
Gay
Lesbian
Straight
Other
Prefer not to say

29. Please identify your ethnic origin:

White British
White (other White background)
Asian or Asian British (Indian)
Asian or Asian British (Pakistani)
Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi)
Other Asian background
Mixed (White and Black Caribbean)
Mixed (White and Black African)
Mixed (White and Asian)
Other mixed background
Black or Black British (Caribbean)
Black or Black British (African)
Chinese
Other ethnic group

30. Do you do any paid work while you are studying? Y/N If yes, how many hours per week on average do you work?

31. While studying Volunteering in the Community, were you:

Single
Married
Living with partner
Living with parents
Living with dependents
Living in halls of residence
Sharing accommodation with friends

32. Please state the subject(s) you are studying, and the academic school you are in.

For example, Sociology, Social Policy, LSSC
Subject 1 Subject 2 School

33. Thank you very much for taking part in this survey.

To enter the prize draw to win the Amazon gift voucher, please write your name and e-mail address here. These details will be kept separate from your answers and will not be used to identify you in way. I may contact you for further information.

Name:

Email address:

Appendix (iv) Pie-charts of student representation on each cohort

COHORT 1: 2010-11

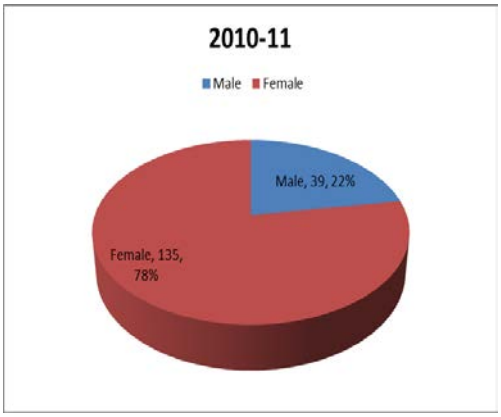

Chart 1: Gender, 2010-11

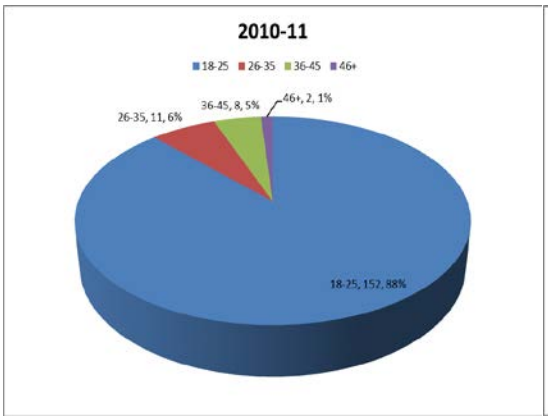

Chart 2: Age groups, 2010-11

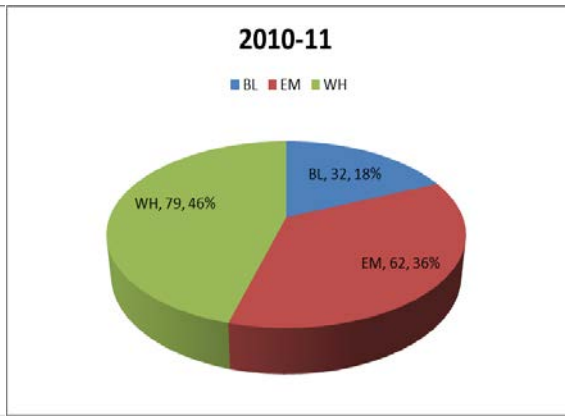

Chart 3: Ethnicity, 2010-11

COHORT 2: 2009-10

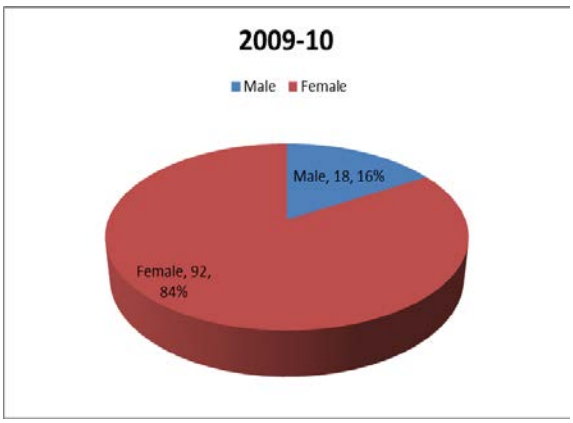

Chart 4 Gender, 2009-10

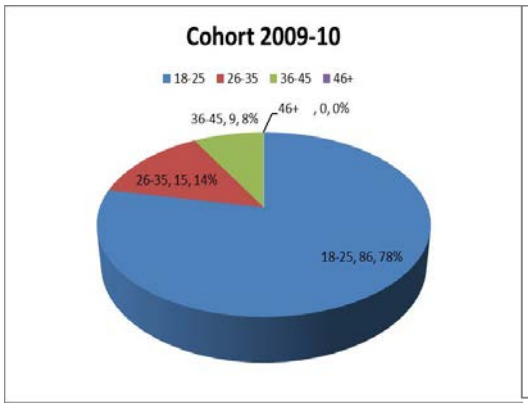

Chart 5: Age groups, 2009-10

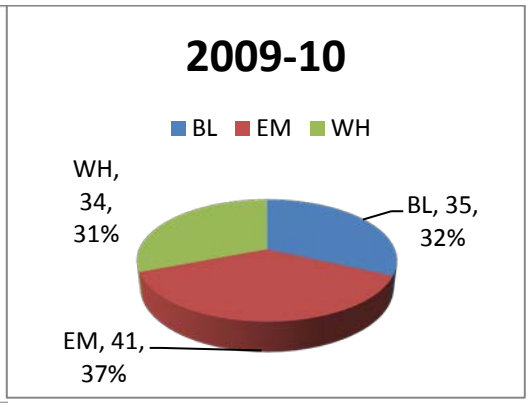

Chart 6: Ethnicity, 2009-10

COHORT 3: 2008-09

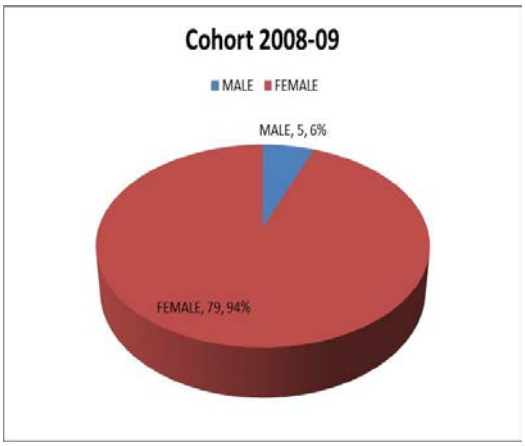

Chart 7: Gender, 2008-09

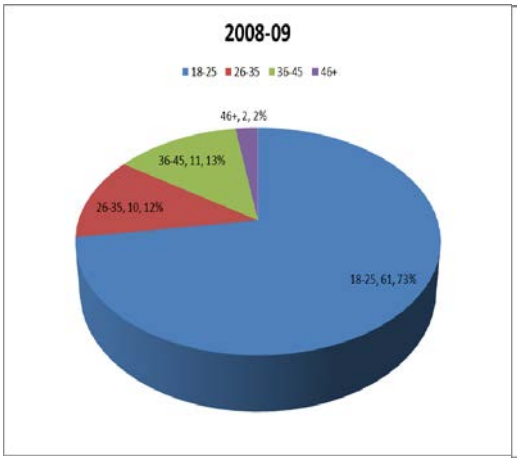

Chart 8: Age groups, 2008-09

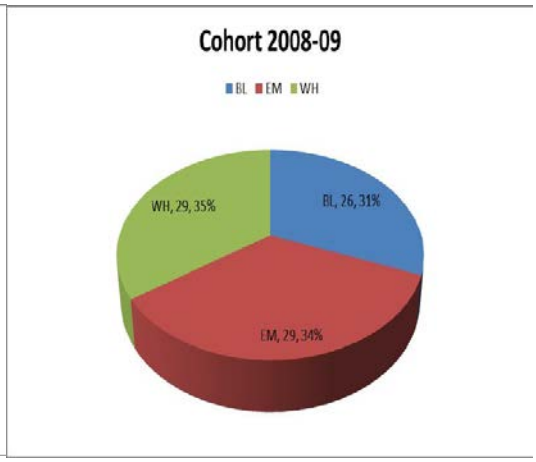

Chart 9: Ethnicity, 2008-09

Volunteering (3) survey

Appendix (v) Comment Report

Analysis

7 responses

Question 2: Did you do any volunteering before coming to university?

3 Yes
4 No

Question 3: Have you continued with this whilst at university?

4 Yes
3 No

Question 4: Did you use this volunteering for the Volunteering in the Community module?

5 Yes
2 No

Question 5: Did you continue with your volunteering when the module finished?

5 Yes
2 No

Question 6: Would you have undertaken volunteering if it was not an accredited module for your degree?

4 Yes
3 No

5 posted comments:

Experience	Time
I have currently been accepted for a volunteer adviser post at the Citizen Advice Bureau. I feel that work experience and volunteering is very essential in my personal and professional development. **76046 EM female, 24**	As a full time student, a father of 3, husband and part time working, time is short. Volunteering as an accredited module was a part of my studies, while contributing a service to my community, a win win scenario for me. **76059 black male, 25**
Whilst in my first year of study volunteering\was promoted around different lecturers, the benefits were expressed and I felt that it would be valuable opportunity. **76049 white female, 22**	Because of working three part time jobs and being a full time student it is very hard to find the time for volunteering. **76081 white female, 21**
It is a good way to valuable work experience and for networking purposes. **76050 white female, 24**	

Question 7: Are you a member of any voluntary groups or organisations at the moment?

Yes

No

Question 8: Please state all your reasons for choosing to study the Volunteering in the Community module.

7 posted comments:

Experience	Good lecturer	Contribution recognised	Abilities/ potential	Stepping stone	Community involvement	Networking opportunity	British culture	Time commitment
It gave me the opportunity to gain various experiences within the children and young people sector, which therefore has	The module was taught by a good lecturer, helps to put your practical activities down academically… **76049 white**	…A benefit is being acknowledged and recognised for your contributions. **76049 white**	…The experience also provided me with recognition of the abilities I already hold and made me realise my	…This experience has provided a stepping stone for me to go on to gain further voluntary positions	…I was given the chance in playing an active role in the improvement and involvement of a local	…I also chose it for practical reasons of familiarising myself with the community and voluntary sectors,	…Last, but not least being an international student, I wanted to meet new people and learn more about the	I chose the Volunteering in the Community module as an elective module, because considering

helped to improve my cv for employment. This module is vital for those who have no experience in the field they wish to go into as it gives an individual insight to how it works. **76044 EM female, 29**	**female, 22**	**female, 22**	potential regarding certain aspects. **76046 EM female, 24**	within other sectors of social welfare law. **76046 EM female, 24**	community. **76046 EM female, 24**	gaining valuable work experience, and networking with professionals and agencies with regards to possible future job opportunities, as well as additional references. **76050 white female, 24**	British culture as well as lifestyles, standards, etc. **76050 white female, 24**	time commitment it was easier to combine volunteering with full-time studying…. **76050 white female, 24**
Undertaking this module was a valuable experience, which was greatly beneficial for me… **76046 EM female, 24**		Volunteering in the Community module was a part of the degree, while adding to the human capital in Wolverhampton. **76059 black male, 25**						
…I also chose it for practical								

reasons of familiarising myself with the community and voluntary sectors, gaining valuable work experience, networking with professionals and agencies with regards to possible future job opportunities, as well as additional references. **76050 white female, 24**								
At the time I felt keen on doing something that provided me with experience other than just doing pure								

assignments in in my first year. **76079 EM female, 23**								
I chose this module as I would be able to have the time that I would normally spend working on a module to be able to volunteer and gain experience in my chosen field. **76081 white female, 21**								

Question 9: Please outline the nature of the volunteering activity you undertook for this module.

Youth related activities x 2
Advocacy x 1
Street pastor x 1
Hospital patient helper x 1
CAB advisor x 1
Administrative support x 1

Question 10: Did this module contribute to your learning in the subject(s) studies at university?

7 Yes

0 No

6 posted comments:

Sociological concepts	Policy impact	Practical focus	Globalisation	Industry
Concepts of social capital and how the charity addressed such issues. The charity aimed to increase the social capital of its clientele. However, I also learnt how the charity enthused concepts of social capital in different aspects (bridging and bonding – Putman). The module helped put into context deep rooted meaning of what I have studied on my course such as; poverty, social exclusion, concept of community, social policies, funding and cuts. Overall, this module enabled me to spend more time with a community organisation and gave me a deeper understanding of my studies at university.	It allowed me to see the practical implications that a policy can have upon the individual rather than what a text book outlines.	In contrast to other modules, this module placed an emphasis on practice and practical learning of new skills, as well as becoming familiar with working environment. Therefore, it made me more aware of all these practical aspects with regards to working environment and constantly changing demands.	Globalisation.	Advocacy in relation to the Social Care industry. Services needed and ways of working and communicating.
76081 white female, 21		**76050 white female, 24**	**76059 black male, 25**	**76049 white female, 22**

76046 EM female, 24				
				The health side of my degree helped my experience and gave me further understanding of the patient and carer role other than learning about it but actually applying it. **76079 EM female, 23**

Question 11: How did this form of learning compare to more conventional class-based learning?

7 posted comments:

Hands-on experience	**Structure of module**	**Theories/practice links**	**Different learning style**
I prefer a practical approach to learning, more hands on! **76049 white female, 22**	It was 1 less module that was class based from the 4 modules in the semester, had it been any other module with hardly any other lectures it would have been very difficult for myself to grasp the module so early on. However, this module was structured step by step with a few workshops which was ideal for the theory learning. **76044 EM female, 29**	Able to experience what we study in class, put ideas, theories and policies into context. This is very important. **76046 EM female, 24**	...In addition to that, considering variety of learning styles, for certain students it might have been particularly valuable and effective way of learning to understand the principles of working environment. **76050 white female, 24**
There were supportive workshops in addition to the volunteering hours within the organisation of choice and/or preference. Therefore, there was an element of class-based		…Nevertheless, as mentioned in previous questions, this module put particular emphasis on practice, which differs greatly from the theoretical class-based learning…	

learning as well as practical learning... **76050 white female, 24**		**76050 white female, 24**	
It was a different set experience to just learning about the experience I was actually doing it so compared to class based learning I prefer the experience of being in a volunteer environment rather than university. **76079 EM female, 23**		The material I got from the class, or the learning centre faced the litmus test on the street. **76059 black male, 25**	
It enabled me to work with members of the local community and work with other organisations which has enabled me to have improved my communication, presentation and confidence skills. **76081 white female, 21**			

Question 12: Please indicate if you think that any of the following have increased as a result of studying Volunteering in the Community.

7 responses: 28 selections

My readiness for paid employment	6
The skills I have that potential employers will value	5
Clarity about what I want to do as a career	6
My chance of gaining employment in my chosen field	4

Contacts/networks that will be useful when looking for employment	6
Anything else	1

2 posted comments:

My career being already decided in the third sector, this opened up ways I could widen organisational scope. **76059 black male, 25**

I haven't done volunteering since my first year so it has left me with a little doubt and worry as I haven't been in a work volunteer environment since but I think when I actually find something when I leave university my previous skills will refresh and come back. **76079 EM female, 23**

Question 13: Please indicate if you think any of the following have increased as a result of studying volunteering in the Community.

6 responses: 27 selections

Communication skills	5
Listening skills	6
Ability to work as part of a team	5
Ability to make decisions	6

Problem-solving skills	5
Any other skills	0

1 posted comment:

Self-confidence

Question 14: Now please select any below that you think have also increased.

6 responses: 27 selections

Organisation skills	5
Time-management skills	6
Skills of negotiation	6
Self-discipline	5
Motivation	5
Any other skills	

1 posted comment:

A practical understanding of the workplace

Question 15: And now, select any of this final list that you feel have increased

Ability to lead or encourage others	4
Confidence in own abilities	6
Willingness to try new things	7
Self-awareness	7
Knowledge of degree subject	6

Question 16: Would you say that volunteering has changed your outlook or attitudes on life?

7 Yes
0 No

3 posted comments:

My volunteering\experience has changed my outlook on life, as it helped me understand different culture, existing and changing demands, as well as main principles of working and working environment in a country different to my country of origin. **76050 white female, 24**

The classroom has a good academic angle, but can be parochial. Volunteering opens you up to new possibilities in you and the world out there. **76059 black male, 25**

It has allowed me to work in a new environment with people and to be able to help them with their problems is gratifying. **76081 white female, 21**

Question 17: Has volunteering made you any more likely to get involved with community groups in the future?

7 Yes
0 No

5 posted comments:

Volunteering important	**Enjoyment/passion**	**Others needs**	**Work in community**
I now think that volunteering is an important part of our society. **76081 white female, 21**	I feel passionate about community working! **76049 white female, 22**	One gets to see the needs in the world we live in, how the statutory bodies are very limited in what they can do at best. **76059 black male, 25**	As a consequence of this volunteering experience I started working part-time within the youth service. **76050 white female, 24**
	Yes because I really enjoyed my first year volunteering. **76079 EM female, 23**		

Question 18: If you are continuing to volunteer in any capacity is it with the same organisation that you volunteered with for the module?

2 Yes
3 No
2 Not applicable

5 posted comments:

No – but still volunteering **76044 EM female, 29**

No – I have decided that I need to be challenged. The charity I volunteered at previously was slightly laid back where CAB I feel will provide me with a challenge and open up more opportunities for me. **74046 EM female, 23**

Yes – I saw as if I made a small contribution and could continue and I serve another organisation too. **76059 black male, 25**

No – I did like my first volunteering organisation but it isn't a place I would have continued with because of travelling issues and the fact that I would like to find something more local to where I live. **76079 EM female, 23**

Question 19: If you are not currently volunteering, main reasons?

3 responses; 13 selections

I completed the university module	1
I felt I'd achieved all I set out to	2
I'd achieved the award or certificate I set out to	1
I preferred to concentrate on my studies	1
Not enough time – because of pressures of study	1

Not enough time – because of involvement with other clubs, sports or societies	0
Not enough time – because of paid work	2
Not enough time – because of family commitments	2
I found myself out of pocket	1
I felt my efforts weren't always appreciated	0
I didn't get asked to do the things I'd like to	0
I felt the organisation was badly organised	0
I lost interest	0
I felt that I'd done enough already	2

Question 20: Career aspirations once you graduate?

7 responses:

Social welfare x 3: 76044; 76046; 76049
Educational psychology x 1: 76050
Voluntary sector x 1: 76059
Property/housing x 1: 76081
Not sure x 1: 76079
MA Social Work 76044

Question 21: Do you think that your volunteering learning experience has influenced your choice of future career?

7 Yes

Question 22: If yes, can you say how? If no, can you say why not?

Explore	Awareness	Experience	Understanding
It's guided me to explore different avenues. **76044 EM female, 29**	It has increased my awareness on what services are provided. **76046 EM female, 24**	Yes, it's given me an experience that I will always remember. **76079 EM female, 23**	I feel that that volunteering meant that I was able to understand the role and day to day running of the housing officers and case workers. **76081 white female, 21**
	I have seen a different side to social service. My university course has made me feel less passionate about my once passions. **76049 white female, 22**		
	Society has unknown needs, difficult to define in functional terms. Someone needs to do it, and I am one of them. **76059 black male, 25**		

Question 23: male/female

6 Female
1 Male

Question 24: age group

18-25	16-35	36-45
5	1	1

Question 25: Do you have any domestic responsibilities – e.g. childcare, or carrying for elderly or inform family members?

3 Yes
4 No

3 posted comments:

My main responsibility was the care for my 8 year old dog, myself and my home. Due to the responsibilities of university and not being able to fund myself evebn with a part-time job I now do not have full responsibility for my dog, who is now in the care of someone else until I am able to work full time! I do however, have the responsibility of funding myself and my home, where I live alone and privately rented.**76049 white female, 22**

A wife and 3 children. **76059 black male, 25**

I help care for my grandparents. **76079 EM female, 23**

Question 26: Do you consider yourself to have some form of disability?

0 Yes
7 No

Question 27: Which of the following most accurately describes your father's or guardian's current economic status?

Paid employment	3
Unemployed and looking for work	0

Not in paid employment and not looking for work	1
Not in paid employment due to ill health	1
Retirement from paid employment	1
Student	0
Not applicable/don't know	0
Other - please specify	1

1 posted comment:

I am the guardian in my home, my dad is retired. **76059 black male, 25**

Question 28: What is his current or most recent job?

Receptionist **76046 EM female, 24**

Supports vulnerable people in his neighbourhood in his spare time. And has vast experience in home improvements/ painting and decorating. **76049 white female, 22**

Driver **76050 white female, 24**

Vicar **76059 black male, 25**

Factory work **76079 EM female, 23**

Aim Higher Associate **76081 white female, 21**

NOTE: some of these entries unreliable – relate to the student themselves.

Question 29: Which of the following most accurately describes your mother's or guardian's current economic status?

Paid employment	4
Unemployed and looking for work	0
Not in paid employment and not looking for work	1
Not in paid employment due to ill health	1
Retirement from paid employment	0
Student	0
Not applicable/don't know	0
Other - please specify	1

1 posted comment:

She is at home with Dad **76059 black male, 25**

Question 30: What is her current or most recent job?

6 posted comments:

Housewife **76046 EM female, 24**

Team leader with 10 years experience in sales the most valued member of her team! **76049 white female, 22**

Receptionist **76050 white female, 24**

Homemaker **76059 black male, 25**

Works for social services **76079**

Civil servant **76081**

Question 31: Which members of your family have attended university? Please select all that apply.

Mother	0
Father	0
Brother/s and sister/s	5
Grandmother	0
Grandfather	0

None/Don’t know	2

Question 32: ethnic origin

White British	2
White (other white background)	1
Asian or Asian British (Indian)	2
Asian or Asian British (Pakistani)	1
Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi)	0
Other Asian background	0
Mixed (White and Black Caribbean)	0
Mixed (White and Black African)	0
Mixed (White and Asian)	0
Other mixed background	0
Black or Black British (Caribbean)	0
Black or Black British (African)	1

Question 33: Do you do any paid work while you are studying?

4 Yes
3 No

I work 18.5 hours per week for my voluntary organisation. **76049 white female, 22**
12 hours per week **76050 white female, 24**

20 hours **76059 black male, 25**
20-28 hours per week **76081 white female, 21**

Question 34: What paid work are you currently doing?

Administrative assistant/finance researcher/assistant volunteer co-ordinator. **76049 white female, 22**
Youth support work **76050 white female, 24**
Clerical **76059 black male, 25**
Sales assistant **76081 white female, 21**

Question 35: Does your volunteering activity mean something different to you personally, compared to your paid work?

3 Yes
2 No

2 posted comments:

I can support others on a one to one basis and feel that on a voluntary basis I make a bigger contribution. **76049 white female, 22**

You feel there is more of an obligation when you are being paid to please your employer, whereas when you are volunteering you are giving up your time so you can take as long as you need to with a client. **76081 white female, 21**

Question 36: While studying Volunteering in the Community, were you:

Single	4
Married	1
Living with partner	1
Living with parents	0
Living with dependents	0
Living in halls of residence	0
Sharing accommodation with friends	1

37. Subjects being studied, and academic school

Social Policy and Social Care **76044 EM female, 29**
Social Policy; Social Welfare Law LSSC **76046 EM female, 24**
Criminal Justice & Social Care **76049 white female, 22**
Psychology, SAS **76050 white female, 24**
Health Studies, SHAW **76079 EM female, 23**
Social Policy and Law; LSSC **76081 white female, 21**

Appendix (vi)

CODING FAMILIES : 1

Volunteer/ing /voluntary
Recognition for volunteering
Social responsibility
Social action

Employability
Employment skills
Skills development
Graduate employment
Certification of volunteering activity
Instrumentalism
CV/enhancement

Community
Cohesive society
Partnership working
Collaboration
University-community engagement
Community involvement
Engagement in public life
Social participation
Citizenship
Social capital
Social value
Social impact

Vibrant economy
Ideology
Big society
New labour governments
Coalition government

Community-based learning
Experiential learning
Learning environments
Academic learning
Accredited volunteering
Reflection
Practical/applied learning

Citizenship
Giving back
Enjoyment of helping
Value change

CODING FAMILIES : 2

Volunteer/ing/voluntary
Recognition for volunteering
Voluntary Sector
Third Sector

Employability
Employment/ skills
Skills development
CV/enhancement
Work experience

Community
Society
Social capital
Social value

Ideology
Big society
New labour governments
Coalition government

Experience/Experiential learning
Academic learning
Accredited volunteering
Reflection
Practical/applied learning

Giving back
Enjoyment of helping

Appendix (vii) Ethical approval

Request for Ethical Approval

Section 1 – to be completed by the researcher

Full name	Pat Green
Module number and title (student researchers only)	ED5015
Research Proposal title (working title)	Student volunteering in the Higher Education curriculum: Policy, practice, principles and partnership
Brief outline of proposal	The focus of the proposed research is accredited learning by volunteering i.e. volunteering in the curriculum (ViC). There is much research on the impact on student learning within initiatives such as ViC (Mooney & Edwards, 2001; Hall et al, 2004; Farrar, 2007). The proposed study will address the gaps in the research that have been identified through an appraisal of the literature. Policy drivers influence the third sector and higher education generally; here a case study approach within one HEI will be initiated with the following research questions: 1. What shapes education policy, provision and participation? 2. What are the salient features of the student experience of ViC? (e.g. motivation; perceptions of academic, civic, personal development and employability) 3. What is the importance and value for the voluntary sector in this collaboration?
Level of research, e.g. staff, undergraduate, postgraduate, master's (award related), MPhil, PhD	Doctoral research

Please outline the methodology that would be implemented in the course of this research.	**Methodologies:** A narrative inquiry methodology, within a broadly interpretative framework will be adopted. 1. For a range of institutional and national policy documents and statements, a discourse analysis will be the main analytical tool, since discourse constituted in these texts and statements can reveal social practices and the nature of power being articulated. The discourse of these dominant groups is important to reveal, since *"discourses are the justifications used to perpetuate particular ways of*

	organising activities, visible in language forms but also perpetuated through social practice and embedded in institutional structures" (Anderson & Williams, 2001:7). Such documentary analysis will help to identify the narrative thrust of the official documents and statements, and examine to what extent they are congruent with the student volunteers' own reasons for undertaking volunteering within their undergraduate studies. 2. Narrative inquiry will help to make sense of students' lives and experiences by the telling of selected stories which will provide insight into the complexities of being a higher education student, a volunteer in the community, and the learning experiences thereby gained (Cousin, 2009: Reissman,1993). **Methods:** Purposive sampling will be used for all groups: • A collection of the relevant policy documents, from 2001 onwards, and statements – both national (government and HEFCE) and local (institutional and local voluntary sector organisations) will be analysed to see how language is used to communicate particular messages. • Semi-structured interviews with managers from four voluntary sector organisations, with whom collaborative relationships have been established. • Semi-structured interviews with four senior managers within the university, at Executive and Deanery level, will be undertaken. • A collection of narratives from undergraduates and graduates, across cohorts and disciplines. Twenty students from two cohorts will be interviewed. 5 graduates will be interviewed. The intention is not to capture a large number of narratives, but to *"generate understandings from going deep rather than wide"* (Cousin, 109:99).
Please indicate the ethical issues that have been considered and how these will be addressed.	All participants in the study will be informed of the research project, aims and objectives. The anonymity of participants will be respected in the analysis of findings, and the subsequent written theses, as well as any other form of dissemination. All research data will be stored (on paper or electronically) in a secured place while the research is being carried out. It is intended that this documentation will be destroyed six months after the

	completion of the research. Participants will be informed that, should they wish to withdraw from the study, that they can do so at any time. Written consent will be obtained.
Please indicate any issues that may arise relating to diversity and equality whilst undertaking this research and how you will manage these.	We have a diverse student body to which we have a duty to treat in a non-discriminatory manner. Students from across this broad range of social categories currently participate in ViC. As such, a diverse body of student respondents is welcomed in this study. Other participants (voluntary sector representatives, senior management within the university) will be selected and invited to participate because of their roles.

Please answer the following questions by deleting the inappropriate response:

1. Will your research project involve young people under the age of18?

NO

If yes, do you have an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate from the Criminal Records Bureau?

Not applicable

2. Will your research project involve vulnerable adults?

NO

3. For which category of proposal are you applying for ethical approval?

Category A

Confirmation of ethical approval

Section 2 – to be completed as indicated, by module leader, supervisor and/or chair of ethics sub-committee

For Category A proposals:

I confirm that the proposal for research being made by the above student/member of staff is a category A proposal and that s/he may now continue with the proposed research activity:

For a student's proposal – Name of module leader or supervisor giving approval	
For a member of staff's proposal – name of chair of ethics sub-committee giving approval	
Signed	
Date	

Category B proposals:

I confirm that the proposal for research being made by above student/member of staff is a category B proposal and that all requirements for category B proposals have been met.

On behalf of students (only):

Name of module leader or supervisor	
Signed	
Date	

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

School of Education

On behalf of members of staff and students

I confirm that the proposal for research being made by above student/member of staff is a category B proposal and that s/he may now continue with the proposed research activity:

Signed	A Hollinshead
Name of chair of ethics sub-committee	Anne Hollinshead
Any conditions attached to this ethical approved (attached on a separate sheet)	No
Date	27.05.10

Checklist of submissions required for category B proposals:

Outline summary: rationale and expected benefits from the study, with a statement of what the researcher is proposing to do and how	
Explanation of the methodology to be used	
An information sheet and copy of a consent form to be used with subjects	
Details of how information will be kept	
Details of how results will be fed back to participants	
Letter of consent from any collaborating institutions	
Letter of consent from head of institution wherein any research activity will take place	